

An interview with Ursula K. Le Guin . . . \$1.75 USA

AMAZING[®]

STORIES

K • 47734 • UK: £1.25 • SEPT 1986

Jayge Carr
Lisa Goldstein



FIRST HE PLAYED THE GOD GAME,
THEN IT STOPPED
BEING A GAME



ANDREW M.
GREELEY



What would it be like to be God?... To bear responsibility for a world of passionate men and women who love you, ignore you, damn you, disobey you, pray to you—and desperately need you? *God Game* is a voyage into the farthest reaches of the human heart—a place where only Andrew Greeley can take us—and beyond.

"I read *God Game* right through in one sitting...ending up at three in the morning.... What a fun book, and yet with what interesting insights.... I keep trying to 'access' a fresh enough score of adjectives to describe *God Game* properly. My function keys are all banjaxed. There are so many levels on which *God Game* will appeal to readers that I'd hate to cite an inappropriate one. For anyone who uses word processing, likes gaming, dabbles in psychology, is in command of other people's lives, delights in taut writing and outré humor, *God Game* is proper reading material, and that doesn't touch half the bases the book does!"

—Anne McCaffrey

Greeley has brought the agony and the ecstasy of godhood to the hardware and software of the computer in a thought-provoking, awe-inspiring novel."

—Ben Bova

God Game the intellectual's guide to alternate reality—I enjoyed it!"

—Piers Anthony



OD

AME



AMAZING™

STORIES

BOOK 1

AMAZIN STORIES™ THE 4-D FUNHOUSE

by Clayton Emery and Earl Wajenberg

by Morris Simon

BOOK 2 AMAZIN STORIES™ JAGUAR!

WATCH
THE NBC
TELEVISION
SERIES



TSR, Inc.

PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

Distributed to the book trade by Random House.

AMAZING, PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION, and the TSR logo are trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.

©1985 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Each of these novels is unique, unlike any you have ever read. Bizarre plots take strange twists. Interesting characters travel dark and dangerous roads. Join them—if you dare!

- * JAGUAR! by Morris Simon.
- * 4-D FUNHOUSE by Clayton Emery and Earl Wajenberg.
- * PORTRAIT IN BLOOD by Mary Kirchoff.
- * NIGHTMARE UNIVERSE by Rob Coulson and Gene DeWeese.

Look for these titles
in your favorite bookstore.

Suggested
retail price:
\$2.95

AMAZING[®]

STORIES

128



F I C T I O N

18 Lisa Goldstein
Scott's Cove

48 Ted Reynolds
Angel Unaware

60 Ruth Berman
In a Season of
Calm Weather

64 Larry Walker
Death-Shade

84 Jayge Carr
Rainbow's End

107 T. Erin March
Goombah on the Hill

121 Don Webb
Securities and
Personal Word

128 Rebecca Brown Ore
The Tyrant That I Serve



18



84

N O N F I C T I O N

41 Baird Searles

Ursula K. Le Guin: The Lathe of Science Fiction

114 Fred Lerner

Protecting Your Science-Fiction Collection

P O E T R Y

39 F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre

Improbable Bestiary: The Kraken

46 Robert Frazier

The Mutant Rain Forest at Daybreak

62 Professor Arthur L. Klein

Kleinisms

79 Professor Arthur L. Klein

Kleinism

106 Richard Wilson

Integers

127 Esther M. Friesner

The Sincere Symbiote

D E P A R T M E N T S

6 Robert Silverberg

Reflections

11 The Readers

Inflections

47 Patrick Lucien Price

Refractions

80 The Artwork of George Barr

On Exhibit

Amazing® Stories, ISSN 0279-1706, is published bimonthly by TSR, Inc., (201 Sheridan Springs Road) P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147. Single copy price: \$1.75, plus 75 cents postage and handling. Subscription rates: \$9.00 for 6 issues (one year) sent to U.S. or Canadian addresses. For all other countries, subscription rates are \$25.00 for surface mail of 6 issues or \$50.00 for air mail of 6 issues. Note: All subscriptions must be paid in advance in U.S. funds only. All subscription requests should be sent to TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 72089, Chicago IL 60689.

This magazine welcomes unsolicited submissions of written material or artwork. All such submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope of size sufficient to return unused submissions to the contributor. The publisher does not assume responsibility for submissions in any event.

AMAZING and the **AMAZING** logo are registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc. **AMAZING® Stories** copyright © 1986 by TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Reproduction or use of editorial or pictorial content in any manner without express permission is prohibited. Second class postage paid at Lake Geneva, WI, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147

Reflections

Robert Silverberg

Once again, for good or ill, we find ourselves living in the Age of Space. The expansion of humanity into the universe, which had been the concern of just a few of us crackpots until the sudden traumatic launching of the Russian *Sputnik* satellite in 1957 and then had become front-page news for more than a decade, had pretty thoroughly faded from the consciousness of the average person since the end of the moon program. Now space is back on the front pages again in startling and unsettling ways — with, I think, beneficial long-run effects, however bumpy the ride has been of late.

Consider. In late January I spent two days at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, along with a host of other science-fiction writers (Philip José Farmer, Ray Bradbury, Gregory Benford, Jerry Pournelle, Larry Niven, Poul Anderson, etc., etc., etc.), watching televised photos of Uranus and its moons that were being sent back by a spaceship from Earth operating at a distance of 1.7 billion miles out. It was an astonishing, awe-some experience.

The morning I came home, there was a phone call from a reporter for a major newspaper, asking for my reaction to the latest space news. I thought he was speaking of the *Voyager* Uranus probe, of course, and launched into a rhapsody on the splendor and grandeur of the achievement. Only gradually did I realize that we were operating at cross-purposes. The space event about which he wanted a quote

from me was the *Challenger* disaster, news of which hadn't yet reached me. It took me a moment to recover from my shock; and then I found myself constructing a statement about the inevitability of accidents and the importance of continuing the space program nevertheless.

Two months later came another pair of virtually simultaneous space events. First, the Soviet Union sent a pair of astronauts up to the giant new Mir space station, which may well mark the beginning of a permanent manned Russian presence in orbit. A few hours afterward, the European Space Agency's *Giotto* spaceship passed within 335 miles of the nucleus of Halley's Comet, sending back amazingly vivid photographs of the comet's strange surface before its cameras were disabled by a bombardment of dust particles.

What are we to make of all this: photos of comets and the moons of Uranus, Russians settling in for long-term residence high above the Earth, an American space shuttle blowing up in front of millions of television viewers?

My immediate responses are full of contradictions. Of course, I lament the loss of our shuttle astronauts; but I think that the *Challenger* debacle, horrendous as it was, will lead ultimately to safer space travel, now that the technical flaws of the shuttle have been laid bare in this terrible way and now that the public-relations pressures that apparently imposed excessive

THE NIN ROO HUNTER

IS . . .

- ★ One of the most stunningly original novels of 1986
- ★ High adventure for high IQs
- ★ So far out that only a master of science fiction could have written it
- ★ So technically correct that only a master of *science* could have written it
- ★ Awash with conceptions, any one of which would form the core of a lesser work
- ★ Filled with the most intriguing combination of humans, aliens, bio-constructs, and mechanical intelligences in the history of science fiction
- ★ An introduction to the galaxy's only perfect woman

ANSWER: ALL OF THE ABOVE!



AUGUST 1986 • 65582-5
416 pp. • \$3.50

Distributed by
Simon & Schuster
Trade Publishing Group
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N.Y. 10020

haste on the whole shuttle program must inevitably diminish. And setbacks, especially ghastly ones like this, have a way of spurring redoubled efforts and attempts to recoup lost positions. Shocked as we all were by the shuttle explosion, it does not seem at all surprising in retrospect. What should have seemed surprising is the unbroken string of successes that preceded it. This was, after all, the first time that American lives had been lost in space. (The three astronauts who died in the Apollo fire were killed during tests on the ground.)

And of course I'm uneasy — as an American — over Soviet progress in space-station technology. My first response was much the same as what I felt in 1957: that we are being outstripped by a determined and dedicated rival and that we run a serious risk of being left so far behind that we may never catch up. But in fact the humiliations that the Russians imposed on us by their early *Sputnik* triumphs led in a direct way to our own space accomplishments, culminating in the 1969 landing on the Moon. And I think that the presence in the months ahead of Leonid Kizim and Vladimir Solovyov in the *Mir* space station above us, coming so soon after our own space catastrophe, will serve to spur us in the same way toward renewed and increased efforts. Though things looked bleak for us in the "space race" of the late 1950's, we were able — thanks to the politically convenient goad provided by the Russians — to achieve great things nevertheless. And after a prolonged period of turning away from space, we may find that the juxtaposition of our

disaster and their splendid new success may have the same effect.

And one contradiction more. For all my seeming cold war rhetoric here — "our disaster," "their success" — I have not lost sight of the fact that the *Mir* is a *human* achievement. In a sense it belongs to us all; only the fact that we have been caught in an ugly rivalry for the past generation with the nation that launched it prevents us in the United States from feeling the full measure of pride that it is up there. Instead we find ourselves, alas, wondering about the political and strategic consequences of letting them get ahead of us in space-station technology. Those considerations are real. But we need to take a more global perspective.

Similarly with the *Uranus/Halley* probes. It wasn't *our* spacecraft that flew past the comet; it was *Europe's*. Some Americans felt chagrin over that. I'm uneasy with such chauvinism. We chose to send our cameras out to the edge of the solar system; the Europeans (and the Russians, for that matter) aimed theirs at the famous comet. Well, fine. There's no reason why the United States needs to do it all. How rewarding for us all, then, that others were capable and willing. Those who are troubled by the achievements in space of other nations might do well to practice a little science-fictional reorientation of their thinking. Those were spaceships from Earth out there taking photographs. One was sent up out of North America, the others from Europe. But they all came from the same little planet. The news from space is troublesome in some respects these days. But it isn't all necessarily bad.

**THE OLDEST FANTASY
OF HUMANKIND—
WITH A DIABOLICAL
NEW TWIST!**

**THE DAMNED
SAGA CONTINUES!**

As *Gilgamesh the King* steps off the National Bestseller lists and into hell!

Heroes in Hell started it all... Nobody who is anybody went to Heaven, and every Hero is in revolt. Not one of them—from Gilgamesh, the first hero of human literature, to James Dean, America's consummate Rebel—thinks he deserved damnation. Yet here they all are, in Janet Morris's Hell.

**THEY'RE MAD AS HELL AND
THEY AREN'T GOING TO TAKE IT ANY MORE!**

All the big names and best minds of history are aiding and abetting the rebellion—er, ah, *the rebellions*—because it may just seem like there are more chiefs down here than Indians, but believe it: Alexander the Great is *not* going to kowtow to Mao... so, from the Pentagon in New Hell to Chairman Mao's Celestial Kingdom,

ALL HELL IS BREAKING LOOSE!

... meanwhile, in Hellywood, Cecil B. DeMille is getting it all on film for the Greatest Movie of All Times, also starring Attila the Hun, Napoleon Bonaparte, the Iron Duke, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, and (of course) the Devil himself...

First *Heroes in Hell*, with its companion hardcover novel *The Gates of Hell*; now *Rebels in Hell*, with Morris and Cherryh's second *Heroes in Hell* companion novel, *Kings in Hell*; Hell is never-ending!

**SOME OF AMERICA'S MOST FAMOUS WRITERS
ARE LINING UP TO GET IN THEIR LICKS...**

Robert Silverberg introduces his national bestseller *Gilgamesh the King* to the tortures of the damned; Martin ("The Six Million Dollar Man") Caidin brings his favorite World War I fighter Ace, and Billy ("The Rose") Kerby throws his rock star angel into the piranha pool. That's right: even the *angels* are coming to Hell. And of course the *Heroes in Hell* core group of Janet Morris, C.J. Cherryh, and David Drake have prepared a hot reception for the newcomers...

FAMED SOVIET DISSIDENT COMING TO HELL

Next volume (*Crusaders in Hell*) Morris promises a *famous* Soviet Dissident Writer (We can't say who yet... shsh!) will come down on ComBloc in a big way, while Gregory Benford makes a triumphant return, running into no less than Bertrand Russell; and the creators of *Thieves' World*—No, our lips are sealed. We can say no more. But if you have yet to join the top writers around in a guided tour of the roughest, toughest venue in the Universe of Discourse...

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

Distributed by Simon & Schuster Trade Publishing Group
1230 Avenue of the Americas • New York, N.Y. 10020

COMING IN JULY 1986 • 65577-9 • \$3.50

REBELS

CREATED BY
JANET MORRIS



IN HELL

WITH THE DEVILISHLY CLEVER ASSISTANCE OF
MARTIN CAIDIN • C.J. CHERRYH • DAVID DRAKE •
BILL KERBY • AND ROBERT SILVERBERG



Michael Cook:
Publisher

Patrick Lucien Price:
Editor

Martin H. Greenberg:
Editorial Consultant

Pamela O'Neill
Michael Williams
Kim Mohan:
Assistant Editors

Ruth Hoyer:
Art Director

Roger Raupp:
Production Manager

Betty Elmore
Carolyn Vanderblit:
Production Assistants

Mary Parkinson:
Advertising Manager

Patricia Schulz:
Circulation Manager

As editors of this magazine, we will continue to read unsolicited, unagented literary material. However, we are not agents of, nor will we forward unpublished literary material to, nor will we even discuss unpublished literary material with Universal City Studios or with any production company associated with those studios or with the television series, Amazing™ Stories.

Inflections

The Readers

Readers and writers take note! Please be aware that all materials — manuscript submissions, letters to the editor, subscription problems — should now be sent to our Wisconsin office: Amazing® Stories, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

— Patrick Lucien Price

Dear Mr. Price,

Science fiction isn't entertainment, it's a template for living. Just this week I've been trying to reconcile myself to a friend who is a creationist, and now I read Elaine Radford's "The Ramsey Gryphon." It's a nice tale, probably took place just down the road from here, and unless I'm mistaken I've met that Mr. Ramsey a time or two, or at least his brother. Radford has a problem with us rural types, though: she starts Ramsey off talking like Snuffy Smith, and by the end he sounds like Oral Roberts's scientific advisor. Okay, okay, it's true that fundamentalist preachers have been known to say, "Mine enemies are sore afraid," but I've never heard anything like, "Bring in the demon gryphon of ages past." Still, I enjoyed the story, and not only because it's about the finest state in the union (indeed, God's country, or why else is the sky Carolina blue?), and I'd like to know more about Ms. Radford. Why don't you print the addresses of the authors, like you do of the menial letter writers?

Your friend,

Bill Griffin

131 Bon Air Road

Elkin NC 28621

We're glad that you enjoyed Elaine Radford's tale, but we're sorry to inform you that we don't print authors' addresses for a variety of reasons. One of which is privacy, another is that several authors are published pseudonymously. Those authors who don't mind being contacted by readers and who enjoy the interaction often send us letters to print in this column. For example, our friend Carol Deppe comes readily to mind.

— Patrick Lucien Price

Dear Mr. Price:

I like very much the things that've been done with *Amazing® Stories* these past few years. It is the one science-fiction magazine to which I subscribe regularly. I find it consistently readable, free of the posturings and clichés left over from the so-called New Wave, and imaginative enough to recall the excitement and wonder I once felt when I discovered science fiction as a grade-schooler.

I recently revived my interest in science fiction after periods of disinterest brought on by some of the extreme developments in the field during the early 1970s. Now that I can afford it, I've started collecting all those sci-fi digests and pulps I couldn't buy as a youngster. I've put together more than a thousand magazines, all the way back to the early Gernsback *Wonder Stories* and *Amazing Stories*.

I am writing because I want to see *Amazing Stories* not only survive but thrive. It's too good a magazine now — and it has too long a tradition — to allow it to waste away. You have made *Amazing Stories*, in my opinion, probably the best magazine it has ever been — but nobody except your readers knows how good a magazine it is.

I hope that you, as editor of *Amazing Stories*, can use letters like this one to help jack up your promotion and public relations departments. As a newspaperman with a long background as a big city reporter, columnist and editor, I am appalled at how little support you seem to receive from outside your own department.

Each month I find, in both *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle*, photos of the covers and listings of the contents of just about every science-fiction and fantasy magazine, both professional and semi-pro. Only *Amazing Stories* is generally missing. Someone in your promotion department ought to have the enterprise to mail off copies to the trade publications in time for their deadlines.

What brought on this letter right now was what appears to me to be your publisher's complete failure to take advantage of Steven Spielberg's new *Amazing™ Stories* series on TV and the unparalleled opportunity it gives you for building up your circulation. We're not talking about science-fiction circulations of tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands; Spielberg's audience will be in the tens of millions.

But the only announcements of the fact that the TV series originated with *Amazing Stories* magazine has been a few stories in the science-fiction trade press and the "Now a TV Series" line on your front cover. The trouble with that, of course, is that most of us who

see your front page are already readers of *Amazing Stories*.


Stories of the TV series in *TV Guide* (with its circulation in excess of 20 million) and in Atlanta's two newspapers gave no hint that the writers even knew that *Amazing Stories* also exists as a magazine. All three stories speculated about what the TV series would be like and made much of Spielberg's secrecy concerning his plans. Where were your PR people? A mailing of news releases about the magazine-TV connection to every major TV writer in the country would have been a helluva fine investment. Or even an ad in *TV Guide* — something like, "Wondering about *Amazing Stories*? We've got the original story for you!"

It's not too late. I expect that even 15 seconds of TV commercial time on Spielberg's *Amazing™ Stories* would cost an awful lot of money, but it could pay off quickly in a dramatic and well-deserved increase in your readership.

Sincerely,
George Greiff
Georgia State University
University Plaza
Atlanta GA 30303

*Thank you, George, for your praises of the editorial content of *Amazing Stories* magazine; we hope to continue to provide our readers with excellent fantasy and science-fiction tales.*

*As for promotion and appearance of the magazine in both *Locus* and *Science Fiction Chronicle*, we have seen reviews of the fiction in both of these publications. Issue copies are sent regularly to Charles Brown and Andrew Porter of those respective magazines. If you do not see mention of *Amazing Stories* regularly there, it's because the magazine is still being*



GOING TO SEE THE END OF THE SKY

William John Watkins

AN OUTSTANDING NOVEL ABOUT A RITE OF
PASSAGE. FROM THE AUTHOR OF *THE
CENTRIFUGAL RICKSHAW DANCER*

On Catchage, first of the
LeGranga space habitats. Going
to See the End of the Sky is a
necessary ritual for those
entering adulthood. Risking
the ora pod journey through
vacuum to a terrifying encounter
with death leads to one of
two fates, victory, and a lifetime
of unique and widespread
power, or defeat, and a future as
a wandering lunatic saint—if one
survives at all. Yet taking the pods to
the End of the Sky takes on a whole new
meaning for three special Catchagers.
Beyar and twins Push and Chancey. Will the
shocking outcome of their ritual ride sow the
seeds of interstellar revolution?

0-445-20200-9/\$3.50
(In Canada, 0-445-20201-7/\$4.50)

Questar

Science Fiction/Science Fantasy

AT BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE

POPULAR
LIBRARY
P

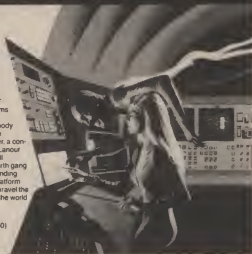
SPIDER PLAY

Lee Killough

HUGO AWARD NOMINEE LEE
KILLOUGH CREATES A GRIPPING
FUTURE WORLD POLICE
PROCEDURAL IN THE TRADITION OF
THE DOPPELGÄNGER GAMBIT.

Law enforcement partners
Sergeant Janna Brill and "Mama"
Maxwell take on what at first seems
to be a routine vehicle theft. But
when the stolen hearse and the body
in it turn up horribly mutilated, the
evidence keeps pointing to Spider, a con-
struction-making miracle on the Lanour
Space Platform. Brill and Maxwell
embark on a twisted trail from Earth gang
wars to corporate killer armies, ending
with a journey out to the space platform
itself. Yet will Brill and Maxwell unravel the
mystery before the very base of the world
economy is utterly destroyed?

0-445-20273-4/\$3.50
(In Canada, 0-445-20274-2/\$4.50)



published bimonthly.

As for increasing circulation of the magazine, well, this issue has been the bane of the editorship — once George Scithers's, now mine. First of all, because of the cost, TV advertisements are out of the question, unfortunately. And probably even more so during the airing of the Spielberg series. We are, however, in the process of discussing and devising a promotional package for the magazine, and with any luck, we'll be able to revive the grandame from her coma.

— Patrick Lucien Price

Dear Mr. Price:

Thank you very much for your letter which accompanied the return of my manuscript. I can't tell you how much it means to a struggling writer to receive comments on his work. Few rejections are as painless as the one I received from you.

In this day of "life in the fast lane," it is nice to know that someone is willing to take the time to pass along very helpful criticism. It is highly appreciated.

Although my short story "The Devastating Change" was not up to your "... current standards for publication," I hope to be able to take your critique to heart and make my next submission a higher-quality piece of fiction.

Again, thanks you for your comments and implied concern for the beginning writer.

Sincerely yours,

Dan Van Mourik

1930B Prospect Drive

Charlotte NC 28213

And we appreciate your letter, Dan. Our only additional comment is this: if we never tell you what's right and what's wrong with your manuscript,

you would never know how to improve your skills. Enough said.

— Patrick Lucien Price

Dear Messrs. Scithers and Price:

Let me thank you for the fine job you are doing, editing *Amazing Stories*. I had been reading the magazines of your competitors, but it got to the point where I just couldn't stand them anymore. For the last couple of years, the only science fiction I was reading that I really liked was from the late fifties and early sixties. It's nice to know that there is some good new stuff coming out. I just finished reading the May 1986 issue of *Amazing Stories*, and I'd like to say how much I like the new writers you have found. My favorite story in this issue was "The Intercept" by William Gasoway, followed by "Billy Jean and the Big Bird" by Sharon N. Farber.

Also, I'd like to thank you for not sending me a subscription renewal notice every three weeks, for the life of my subscription. As long as your magazine keeps printing these fine stories, you needn't worry about me forgetting to re-subscribe.

Yours truly,

Tom Knighton

P.O. Box 144

Frontier MI 49239

We, too — and quite obviously — enjoy the stories that our new writers produce for us. And we hope that William, Sharon, et al., will continue to send us their manuscripts. It's exciting for this editor to work with new and refreshing talent, to help the writer hone his or her skills and focus more clearly upon his or her ideas. Though many new short-story writers often go on to become new novelists, thus producing less shorter fiction than they did during the earlier days of



You'll be
amazed...



...by what we've got in store for you!

A limited quantity of back issues of **Amazing® Stories** is available through the Mail Order Hobby Shop. Just take a look at the order form on the back side of this ad, then check the lines of those issues you'd like to order. If you want more than one copy of a specific issue, write the number of copies on that issue's line.

The price of an offering is listed after the name of the issue; payment in U.S. funds **only**. Be certain to add \$3.50 for shipping and handling charges. Then, clip and mail the order form to: The Mail Order Hobby Shop, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

Also available...

AMAZING® Stories: 60 Years of the Best Science Fiction

This trade paperback anthology features some of the best science-fiction and fantasy stories that appeared in **AMAZING® Stories** during its long-running 60-year history. Some of the authors that are represented are Isaac Asimov, Ursula K. Le Guin, John Jakes, Robert Bloch, and Philip K. Dick. Sixteen pages of full-color reproductions of original magazine covers are also included.



ISSUES AVAILABLE

___ Jan. 1983, \$1.50	___ May 1984, \$1.75	___ July 1985 \$1.75
___ Mar. 1983, \$1.50	___ July 1984, \$1.75	___ Sept. 1985 \$1.75
___ July 1983, \$1.50	___ Sept. 1984, \$1.75	___ Nov. 1985 \$1.75
___ Sept. 1983, \$1.50	___ Nov. 1984, \$1.75	___ Jan. 1986 \$1.75
___ Nov. 1983, \$1.50	___ Jan. 1985, \$1.75	___ Mar. 1986 \$1.75
___ Jan. 1984, \$1.75	___ Mar. 1985, \$1.75	___ May 1986 \$1.75
___ Mar. 1984, \$1.75	___ May 1985, \$1.75	___ July 1986 \$1.75

___ AMAZING™ Stories anthology, \$7.95

(Please PRINT all information plainly.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Prov. _____ Zip _____

Country _____

Date _____

* Please use street address, not a P.O. Box number.

Check one to indicate your choice of payment

☐ Check enclosed

☐ MasterCard

☐ Money order enclosed

☐ Visa

Credit Card No. _____

M/C Bank No. _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Allow six to eight weeks for delivery. Magazines available only while supplies last.

AMAZING is a registered trademark owned by TSR, Inc.

©1986 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

(Clip along dotted line, then mail in order form.)

their careers, the personal satisfaction — at least, on this end — of having been of assistance is a great feeling, one that cannot be measured in words.

As for the renewal notices, well, let's just say that some people — ourselves included — are absentminded and in need of a reminder that it's time to renew their subscriptions.

— Patrick Lucien Price

Dear Mr. Price,

I received my copy of your writer's guidelines, and I wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed reading them. I was a little skeptical about something that cost \$2, but *Constructing Scientific Fiction & Fantasy* was worth every penny.

Sincerely,
G. K. Sprinkle
5405 Chevy Circle
Austin TX 78723

But, of course. Would we sell a writing pamphlet if we didn't feel it was worth the cost to the purchaser?

Additionally, now that you've read the pamphlet, **apply** what you've learned, and let us see that next manuscript.

— Patrick Lucien Price

Dear Patrick:

Hope you like the enclosed manuscript.

Anything more from Ms. bes Shahr? Don't know about anyone else, but I'd really love to see more of her stuff. Also, it's been great seeing the "Improbable Bestiary" again.

I remain,
Daniel Keys Moran
P.O. Box 667
Van Nuys CA 91408

We're pleased you asked that question. We have on hand "*Light Fantastic*," a sequel to "*Hellflower*," which appeared in our March 1985 issue. And the "*Improbable Bestiary*" is continuing, too.

Readers, please continue to send us your letters. We'd like to read about your likes and dislikes; this way we can better serve your needs. After all, you are reading this magazine for personal enjoyment. Also, feel free to respond to other issues—be they about writing, the SF and fantasy community, or the general state of affairs in the world at large. We do value your opinions, though we may not agree with them. So, write us!

Till next issue,
— Patrick Lucien Price



SCOTT'S COVE
by Lisa Goldstein
art: George Barr





Lisa Goldstein's first novel, The Red Magician, came out in 1982 and won the American Book Award for best paperback original. Her second, The Dream Years, was published by Bantam in 1985.

The first thing Tim noticed when he got to Berkeley, after the bus ride up the California coast, was that his mother would have fit right in. No one would have pointed her out or nudged someone else to look at her, a small thin-boned woman with two or three layers of clothing and a wide-eyed expression. No one would have taken any notice if she talked to herself in the street or screamed and ran away. Telegraph Avenue was filled with crazies.

But that was the last thought he had about his family for a long time. He was glad to have left them behind: his mother and her two sisters, like the three witches from *Macbeth*; his snobbish cousins; Grandmother Angelika, who always seemed to know what he was thinking; the strange language he had never learned because his father was an outsider. And the other things, too, the things he had convinced himself he'd forgotten.

For the first time in his life he was happy. He went to classes, he made friends; in the same heady afternoon he'd lost his virginity and heard his first punk record. There was no way, he thought, he was going to go back home.

All his friends went home for the spring break. He took long walks in the Berkeley hills, worked in the campus bookstore, read the books he hadn't had time for during the quarter. He was used to being alone.

One day as he came back to the empty dorm room the phone rang. "Hello?" he said.

"Hello." The voice was familiar, but out of place somehow.

"Who —"

"It's Camilla, Timmy. Your cousin."

He was back in grade school, watching a fight on the playground between his relatives and some outsider kids. He stood indecisive, wondering which side to join, whether to join in at all. And then Camilla called out, "Timmy! Help me, Timmy!" and he waded in.

He remembered the fight because it was the beginning of his loneliness. Afterwards none of the outsider kids would speak to him. But Camilla and the rest of his relatives always talked in their strange guttural language, the language he didn't understand.

"Timmy? Are you there?"

"Uh — yeah. Where are you?"

"Here," Camilla said. "In Berkeley."

"In — in Berkeley?" he said stupidly. He could not imagine any of his relatives outside of Scott's Cove. He wanted to hang up, but it was too late. "Why?"

"I'm taking classes next quarter," she said. "But — I don't know — Timmy, it's so strange. So big. I was wondering if you could — I don't know — show me around a little?"

"Like you showed me around back home?"

"What?"

"I said, like you showed me around back home?" He was surprised at how angry he felt; he thought he'd left his bitterness behind when he came to Berkeley. "Like you let me join your group when all the other kids stopped talking to me? In other words, not at all. The answer's no."

"What —"

Tim hung up, feeling as though he'd had a narrow escape. He felt the way he had as a child when his mother came to school on Parents' Night, a strong conviction that his relatives should stay the Hell out of the rest of his life.

When school started a few days later Camilla was in his astronomy class. He looked into the extraordinary eyes that he remembered from childhood — one green and one brown — as he walked into class. "Hello, Timmy," she said. "I'm glad we have a class together, aren't you?" He grunted something and went to sit as far away from her as possible.

By the end of the week he found he couldn't continue to ignore her. She really did look lonely, sitting by herself in her ridiculous Scott's Cove clothing, the pinafore-like dress and long-sleeved blouse. When he caught her trying to eat a cold lunch from one of the vending machines, he showed her how to use the microwave oven. A few days later he was showing her around campus and teaching her how to buy a ticket for the BART trains.

"Do you want to come over to my place?" she asked after they had ridden across the bay to San Francisco and back. "I could make you some good home cooking."

"I hated home cooking," he said, trying to make a joke out of it. "Too spicy."

"Well, I have a cookbook for American food," she said. "We could try that."

"Okay," he said, wondering what he was getting into. Perhaps he had misjudged her when they were kids. Maybe what he thought was her snobbery was really shyness.

Camilla turned out to have her own apartment near the campus. It was sparsely furnished — she hadn't brought anything from home. "This is pretty impressive," Tim said. "How'd you get Aunt Sonya to spring for this? My dad just barely agreed to pay for tuition."

"Oh," she said. "You know."

He was nodding before he realized he didn't know. One of the things he had always hated about the relatives — their secrecy — came back to him now. Calm down, he thought. Don't be paranoid.

"I hope it's good," Camilla said later as she brought out two hamburgers

from the kitchen. It wasn't. Camilla had used the same spice all the relatives back home had used, the spice he had never been able to identify. He forced himself to eat.

"It's great," he said.

Camilla looked pleased. "I wanted to thank you somehow," she said. "For everything you're doing for me."

"That's okay," Tim said.

"No, it's not," Camilla said. "I know it can't be very exciting for you, dragging your cousin all over town. But I don't — There's just no one else here I can talk to. You're the only one here who can even pronounce my last name. My American history professor started calling me Eyechart. Very funny, huh?"

Tim tried not to laugh. Her last name did look a little like an eyechart. His own name — Coleman — had come from his American father.

"I told my mother about you when I called home," Camilla said. "They're worried about you, you know. They want to hear from you."

"No way," Tim said, swallowing the last of the hamburger. "Not a chance."

"You don't even have to call," Camilla said. "Just a letter —"

"No."

"Why not?"

Tim looked across the small table at her. "When I was six years old I saw Grandfather Hugo's ghost."

"Yes?" Camilla said, puzzled.

"I didn't think anything of it," he said. "I didn't know there weren't supposed to be such things as ghosts, or that you were supposed to be scared when you saw one. The only thing I didn't understand was why he spoke English to me. He never spoke English when he was alive."

"I don't see —"

"When I was ten I found a door in the basement that had never been there before. I opened it and saw two or three rooms, furnished rooms. The next day when I went back the door was gone."

Camilla opened her mouth to say something. Tim spoke louder. "When I was twelve someone in school gave me a pack of cards. I played solitaire with them at home. And then Mom saw them and went crazy. I mean literally crazy. She had one of what Dad called her episodes —"

"Well, of course," Camilla said. "Cards are dangerous."

"But *why*?" Tim said. "Why didn't anyone ever tell me anything? Every so often the table in the dining room would be set with the special china, and we'd have to eat in the kitchen. I guess it was a holiday, but which one? And why set the table if you weren't going to eat off of it? And it happened at different times of the year, sometimes in summer, sometimes in fall —"

"Cards are dangerous because they foretell the future," Camilla said.

Tim had been about to say more. He stopped. "Are you going to explain

things to me now?" he said finally. "Did the aunts and my mother and grandmother get together and decide I could finally be told things? Is that what happened?"

Camilla said nothing.

"I suppose I should be grateful for whatever crumbs of information I get," Tim said. "So cards are dangerous because they foretell the future. You know, that's exactly the sort of answer I'd expect from you. That kind of answer is why I left home. That mysticism. That sort of lunacy. The rest of the country would consider you crazy, you know. Not just my Mom. All of you. Everyone at Scott's Cove."

"Mysticism," Camilla said. "I never thought of it like that. It's just — Well, it's just the way we live."

"And you never wondered about it at all?" Tim said. "Come on, Camilla, what are you doing at college? I'm learning things here. I'm learning about logic, for one thing. I'm learning that half the things I saw back home were impossible. And you tell me you never wondered about them?"

"But why don't you want to talk to your mother?" Camilla said. "Are you going to stay away forever?"

"Why didn't my mother want to talk to me?" Tim said. "Why didn't anyone ever tell me anything, teach me how to speak the language, explain things to me? Was it because of my father, because he was an outsider? I was so lonely when I was growing up. I must have read every book in the school library. Finally I just got sick of it and I left. And I have friends here — friends, for the first time in my life. Do you know what that means to me?"

Camilla was looking at him with her disconcerting green and brown stare. "I'm sorry you feel like that," she said. "Scott's Cove is the most wonderful place in the world to me. I'm homesick every day here."

"Well, of course," Tim said. "Of course you'd feel that way. You were one of the most popular kids there. How do you think I felt, watching you, hoping for just one second of your time?"

"I didn't know," Camilla said. She was frowning. "You were always so quiet."

"I wasn't quiet," Tim said. "I couldn't speak your language, that's all."

"Kids are really so stupid," Camilla said. "I guess I thought of you as an outsider."

"Great," Tim said. "All the outsider kids thought of me as one of you guys."

"Oh," Camilla said slowly. "I guess — That must have been pretty horrible."

Tim watched her closely. What was she thinking? Was she remembering her own childhood, warm and safe within a family that loved her? Could she understand how he had felt, looking at that from a distance? "Yeah, it was pretty bad," he said. "I can't believe that this is the first time you've thought of that, though. What did you think when you saw me at school?" He felt a

little ashamed of himself, making her squirm like this. But for the first time in his life he had something someone in the family wanted — knowledge of how to get by in the outside world — and he couldn't let the opportunity pass.

"Well, you know," Camilla said. "I mean, I really was stupid. I never questioned anything. I knew who the family was, and I knew you weren't really part of it, I guess because of your father. And because you couldn't speak the language. Look, I'm sorry. Really. If I had it to do over again . . . Well, I'm sorry."

"Okay," Tim said. He laughed. "You know, I once swore I'd never forgive you for ignoring me in grade school. But all I really wanted was an apology. All right, I'll forgive you. Shows you what strength of character I have, I guess."

Camilla smiled and reached her hand across the table. "Friends?" she asked.

"Friends," he said, taking her hand.

Tim began going over to Camilla's apartment several times a week. He helped her in the kitchen when she cooked, and when she picked up the strange spice he hated — it came in a white cloth bag, tied with green thread — he took it away from her. She looked at him and laughed.

He found himself smiling on his way to classes or while studying at the library. He couldn't believe it. Camilla, the most popular girl in Scott's Cove, actually liked him. Actually wanted to spend time with him. She hadn't been avoiding him all those years when they were growing up, hadn't thought there was something wrong with him. He had been wrong about her for years.

One day she turned to him while making dinner, and before he could think about it he kissed her. The passion with which she kissed him back surprised him — surprised both of them, he thought. She led him to her small bed, dinner forgotten, and they undressed each other hastily. He thought he had never been so excited. He kissed her again and again, wanting to say her name over and over. She held him close . . . and suddenly he noticed her eyes were open, watching him. Some optical illusion made one eye seem close and the other seem miles away. He felt himself falling, drawn into a vortex with no possibility of return. Then she cried out and the strange eyes closed. He cried out too, and the intensity was enough to make him almost forget what he thought he'd seen.

After dinner that night he told her something he had never told anyone before. "You remember that mirror of Grandmother's?" he said. "The one at the end of the hallway, right off the living room? I used to look into it when I was really young, two or three. I remember seeing dinosaurs in there, or armies fighting each other, or brightly colored fish. One day I saw horses galloping past, and I reached out my hand to touch them. And there

was a loud sound like thunder, and my hand burned and I jerked it away."

Camilla was looking at him intently now. He wondered what he had said. "I — I never told anyone any of this," he said. "I guess you can tell Grandmother if you want, I'm far enough away from her now. After that, there weren't any more pictures. All I could see was a picture of me, standing and staring and waiting. A black and white picture of me. Did you ever realize that, that Grandmother's mirror is only black and white?"

"You — you broke Nona's mirror?" Camilla said.

"Yeah," Tim said, trying to sound light. He wished he'd never said anything. "Come on — you can't tell me you didn't know. I thought you guys knew everything that happened."

"No," Camilla said. She looked down at her plate. "They were still wondering who did it when I was growing up."

"Oh," Tim said. "Was it — was it very important?"

Camilla shrugged. "Yes," she said. "I guess so."

"Why?"

She shrugged again. "I don't really know," she said. "You'll have to ask Nona."

"Come on, Camilla," Tim said. "You know I'm not ever going back. Tell me. Aren't we friends?"

"Really," Camilla said. "I don't know. Ask them. They want to hear from you anyway."

"You ask them," Tim said. "You tell them everything about me, anyway. You might as well tell me something — What's wrong?"

He had never seen her so sad, not even in the early days when he had avoided her. She looked as if she were about to cry. "It's just — well, I've been feeling so bad," she said. "They did ask me to spy on you. They sent me up here and, well, that's why I have this apartment. So you —"

"So I'd want to spend time with you, get away from the dorm room," Tim said, finishing her sentence. He couldn't even bring himself to feel angry. "I knew it. It's almost a relief to find out I'm not paranoid after all — they really are after me. The only thing I don't understand is why. They never gave a damn about me when I was home."

"Well, they're worried about you," Camilla said. "Nona said something — something about how you're going to be very important. I didn't really understand it. I guess when you lived there they could keep an eye on you, but now that you're away . . ."

"You know, now that you mention it, sometimes I did think they were watching me," Tim said. "Especially Nona. So she said I was going to be important, huh? Funny, she never acted as if I was."

"I'm sorry," Camilla said. "I know — We said we were friends, and that's not something friends do — spying, and stuff like that. I won't do it again. I'll tell them when they call —"

"Look, I don't care," Tim said. "You tell them what you want — I'm

never going back, so it doesn't matter to me. Anyway, I knew you were spying all along. I mean, come on, Camilla, what are you doing here? I never thought of you as the college type."

Camilla almost laughed. "You know, I never did either," she said. "But now that I'm here — well, it's like you said. I'm learning things here, about — about logic, and all that. It's interesting. I'm glad I came, really. I'm glad I got out of Scott's Cove."

"Well, that's great," Tim said. "That really is."

"Are we still friends?" Camilla said.

"Friends," Tim said. Camilla smiled with relief.

One day when she let him in he heard the phone ring in the living room behind her. "Just a minute," she said. "Have a seat." He felt briefly jealous — he hadn't known she had any friends besides him — but the jealousy turned into a more complex emotion when he heard her answer the phone. She was speaking in the relatives' deep guttural language, probably talking to her mother. He heard his name mentioned several times, and he wondered uncomfortably what she was saying.

To take his mind off the phone call he began to look through her small bricks-and-boards bookshelf. He saw mostly textbooks, a few cookbooks that hadn't made it into the kitchen, a book that had been a best-seller a few years ago. Not a very exciting collection, he thought. Near the end of the shelf was a fat red hardcover book with no dust jacket, and he moved closer to see it better. *Tim's Times*, it said. Intrigued, he took it down and opened it to the first page.

Tim's first memory was of his grandmother Angelika's mirror, the tiny close print said. He read it again, unwilling to believe, colder now than when he'd first come in. He flipped forward and read about his grandfather Hugo's death, the fight on the playground, the day his mother had taken away the deck of cards. And the end? Tim thought, horrified. Is it about — But the end was blank.

"Tim," he heard Camilla say on the phone, and again, "Tim."

Suddenly his terror turned to anger, a deep sense of betrayal. It was one thing to spy on him, almost a joke since he'd never be coming back, but she was using magic. She was using the book to find out what was happening in his life. He had thought he'd gotten away, but all the while they were laughing at him. You can never get away, the book was saying to him. You can't hide from the magic. You belong to us, to Scott's Cove. Don't think you can escape from what you are.

He put the book on Camilla's table. She'd understand when she saw it. Then he turned and left the apartment. He heard his name mentioned again, this time urgently, but he did not stop.

He stood on University Avenue with his thumb out and took the first ride

that came along. The next few days were a haze of cars and roadside cafes. On the third day out he developed a fever. Everything was sharpened to an unnatural clarity or blurred by sleep. His money was running out. He didn't know where he was, and he could not summon the energy to ask. All he wanted was to escape. At times in his delirium he thought he could hear them coming after him, laughing.

He stood outside the men's room in a small restaurant with no idea of how he'd gotten there. The phone rang as he passed it, and without thinking he picked it up. "Hello?" he said. His head was pounding.

"Hello?" a voice said. "Timmy?"

He stood still, watching the walls fade in and out in time to his pulse. Someone in the restaurant laughed, and for a moment he thought it was his grandmother. "How did you find me?" he said.

"It's in the book," Camilla said. "It says where you've been. Timmy —"

"I bet it does," Tim said. "Pretty handy for you, isn't it?" The effort at sarcasm exhausted him.

"Timmy, you've got to believe me," Camilla said. "I never saw this book before in my life. It's the magic — the magic does things like this. We can't control it."

"The magic," Tim said. "That's two things you've told me now — that cards are dangerous, and that you can't control the magic. Maybe in a year you can tell me something else. Maybe when I'm fifty I'll understand what's going on." He was shouting. Someone came out of the men's room and stared at him.

"You've got to come home, Timmy," Camilla said. "The magic wants you home."

Tim was silent. Finally he said, "Listen. That book you've got — does it have this conversation in it?"

"Yes," Camilla said. She sounded unwilling. "Yes, it does."

"And it adds a line every time I say something?"

"Yes."

Tim shuddered. "I'm sorry," he said. "I can't go home to — to that. That's why I left home. I can't deal with things I don't understand."

"But —" Camilla said.

Tim hung up. The phone rang again almost immediately, but he ignored it.

A day later the man he was riding with stopped at a gas station and Tim walked across the hot parking lot to the gift shop. It was cooler inside. He saw a large glass paperweight and for some reason went to look closer. Inside the paperweight was Scott's Cove — the houses with gables and the red front doors, the tall chimneys, the weathervanes in the shape of fantastic animals. The small town overlooked a small glass sea. He shook the paperweight and snow twirled within it, and he remembered when he was ten and it had snowed in Scott's Cove, the first snowfall along the California coast in

sixty years. He remembered too what Camilla had said — the magic wants you home — and he turned and walked out of the air-conditioned store to the car.

The driver of the next ride he got began to talk about the importance of family almost as soon as Tim was in the car. "I always think it's a shame when I see these young kids running away from home," he said, not looking at the road but at Tim. Tim got out at the stop-light before the freeway.

The fever grew worse. He hadn't eaten anything for a day or two, and he was feeling light-headed. A few of the cars on the road slowed for him and then sped up again after seeing his face, flushed red with fever or white and chill. Once or twice he heard a phone ring as he passed it but he didn't answer it. He thought he might be in Oregon. It was colder, anyway.

That night as he slept on a bus bench he had a dream that his mother needed him. As a child he had sometimes felt that he was raising her as much as she was raising him. He remembered taking her home several times when the madness came on her. Now in the dream he was doing it again, feeling the old mixture of love, protectiveness and shame. When he woke in darkness he felt a longing for her that was as real and hard as the bus bench underneath him.

The fever had passed, and in its aftermath he felt giddy, euphoric, as though the world were on his side. Why not go back? he thought drowsily. They're just a bunch of old women. Why not stop by, tell them you're okay? You've built them up into such ogres, you'll probably be surprised at what they really look like. You know how children exaggerate. And anyway, you can always leave again. They let you go the first time, didn't they?

A truck rumbled past. He sat up and shook his head, fully awake now, wondering how much of his new confidence was just returning health. Maybe I'll go home later, he thought. I'll get a job, settle down, go home some time next year. Maybe.

The pick-up truck that stopped for him that morning was painted bright blue. The wooden fence around the bed was painted green, and four or five hubcaps were nailed to it, reflecting the sunlight. If Bilbo Baggins drove a pick-up truck, he thought as he climbed into the cab, this is what it would look like.

"Where you headed?" the driver said. She even looked a little like a hobbit, long brown hair, red cheeks and blue eyes.

"Um," Tim said. He wanted to ask her if she had hair on her feet. "I don't know. Where are you going?"

"San Diego," the woman said. "My name's Renee."

"San Diego?" Tim said. "I thought you were going north!"

"North is the other side of the road, man," Renee said.

"Um," Tim said. The magic wanted him home. He was too tired to argue. And maybe his mother needed help. "No. No, that's okay. I have to get to a place called Scott's Cove, actually. Have you ever heard of it? It's south of

Santa Cruz, on the California coast."

"No," Renee said. "Is that where you're from? Scott's Cove?"

"Yeah," Tim said. He hated talking about his family. "I can pay for some of the gas. Where are you from — San Diego?"

"No," Renee said. "Detroit. Right now I'm on vacation." She turned the key in the ignition and started the car. It went a few feet and stalled. She tried again, and made it on the third try.

"Oh, yeah?" Tim said. "Until when?"

"Until my money runs out," she said. "Or the truck dies. Whichever comes first." She made a face. "Right now I can only get it into third gear. That's why it's so hard to start."

Tim yawned. "I'm sorry," he said. He yawned again. "I've had a bad night. Would you mind if I just went to sleep?"

"No," she said. "No, go ahead." They were going a full forty miles an hour. The last thing he heard was the truck behind them honking as it tried to pass.

He awoke late that night. "I'm sorry," he said, rubbing his eyes and stretching. "I guess I'm not much company. Where are we?" He looked out the window and saw a roller-coaster silhouetted against the sea. For a horrible moment he thought that the relatives had built it, that he was back in Scott's Cove. Who knew what they had done in his absence?

"Santa Cruz," Renee said. "The boardwalk."

"Oh," Tim said. He stared at the twisting shapes of the roller-coaster, wondering what it was about the meeting of sea and land that attracted the crazies.

"We could stay here overnight," Renee said. "I've got some friends here. Or we could press on. It's not very far, is it?"

"Well, I'm not tired," Tim said. "Listen, I could take over driving if you want me to. Or we can stop if you're tired. Whatever you want."

"Let's go," Renee said. The reality of what he was doing hit him with those two words and he wanted to tell her to stop. He would be seeing his family *tonight*. "Thanks for the offer, but I don't think anyone could drive this truck besides me," she said.

An hour later she had told him about her family, her year at school, the jobs she had taken to buy the truck. He had steered the conversation away from himself and back to her whenever she asked about his family. He felt himself sweating, his heart pounding, and he wondered if it was nerves or if the fever was returning.

They reached the top of a hill and he saw Scott's Cove spread out before them. "That's it," he said, looking down at the houses on the sea-cliffs.

"That's it?" Renee said, sounding delighted. "That's where you live? It looks — I don't know — it looks quaint."

"Quaint?" he said. How could she presume to make a judgment on Scott's Cove? She had never lived there, didn't know about the ghosts, the

madness, the magic that was the reason they were on this road right now going toward the town. And what did she call this ridiculous truck that would only start in third gear? Angry now, he tried to think of a scathing reply.

A single star detached itself and fell toward earth, arcing across the sky toward Scott's Cove. As they watched it fell down through one of the tall chimneys and into the house. The house was lit from within, briefly, and then went dark again. "What — what was that?" Renee said, shaken.

Tim sighed. He was home.

As they drove up to Tim's house Renee said, "Listen, I'm sorry about that." Tim took his eyes off the road to look at her. "I mean calling where you live quaint. That was sort of a stupid thing to say. I mean, no one ever called Detroit quaint, but I understand how you feel. I'm sorry."

"That's okay," Tim said. "I really wish it was just an ordinary town, that's all. I really wish I came from Detroit. And I'm — you know — I'm pretty nervous. It's that house there."

Renee nodded as she stopped the truck. "Okay," she said.

"Thanks for the ride," Tim said, getting out. He watched her as she tried to start the truck, staying in the street until she drove away.

His mother came down the stairs as he let himself into the house. "Timmy," she said, hugging him close. He had forgotten how small she was. He drew back to look at her. "It's good to have you back," she said.

He hadn't admitted to himself until that moment that he was worried about her. She looked fine, better than he had expected. "Hello, Mom," he said. He took one last look at her before he went upstairs to his bedroom.

The resolution formed while he slept, and when he woke the next day it was clear and strong in his mind. He wanted some answers. The magic may have wanted him home but now that he was here he wanted a few things of it. If the answers weren't forthcoming he would leave.

Matt Coleman was eating breakfast when Tim went downstairs.

"Morning, Tim," his father said. "It's good to see you."

"Where's Mom?" Tim said.

"She's out doing some errands," Matt said. "Sit down. Have some breakfast."

Okay, Tim thought grimly. If I can't ask her then I'll start with you. "I've been wondering," he said. "Where's Mom from? Mom and the rest of the relatives?"

Matt lifted his coffee cup halfway to his mouth, stopped and shrugged. "One of those small countries in Europe," he said. "It was swallowed up after the war. She told me once but I forgot."

Tim felt his frustration return. It seemed as though anger and confusion had been part of his childhood, real as the house around him. There were so many secrets. Well, not any more.

"What brings you home?" Matt asked. "Didn't school start?"

"You should know," Tim said. He felt he was playing a vastly important game, the rules of which had never been explained to him. "It was all in the book."

"The book?" Matt said, puzzled.

"Yeah," Tim said. "Camilla's book. Didn't they tell you about it? Mom knew — she was right there when I came home last night. Or don't they tell you things either, because you're an outsider?"

"They don't tell me much," Matt said. "I don't really ask."

"How can you live that way?" Tim said. It was less a question than a shout of anger. "How can you live with someone without even — even knowing where she's from? Don't you notice things? Aren't you curious? What's wrong with you?"

Matt looked across the table at his son. "I never knew you felt this way," he said. "You never said anything."

"What could I have said?" Tim said. "For all I knew, everything around here was completely normal. You certainly acted as if it was."

"I'm sorry," Matt said. "I never thought — I'm sorry."

"I don't want your apology," Tim said. "Camilla said she was sorry too, for all the good it did me. I want answers."

Matt tried to smile. "You came to the wrong person then," he said. "I told you. I don't know anything."

"You know *something*," Tim said. "Tell me something, anything. How did you meet my mother?"

"All right," Matt said. "I'll tell you a story."

"I'll bet you never knew I went to Harvard," he began. "My father — you never met him — he was a very rich man. Maybe he's alive, I don't know. Anyway, I went to Harvard for a year, dropped out and tried to become a writer. My father paid for that too — he thought it was a phase I'd grow out of. Then I wanted to get my teacher's credential. That was too much for him. He couldn't accept the idea of his son becoming a lowly teacher. So we lost touch. Well, we were never very close to begin with."

Tim nodded. He had known his father had once been a teacher, but the part about his grandfather was new. "So I taught English at a community college near L.A. The administration didn't like me very much — for one thing I said some things about free speech and for another I wore a motorcycle jacket to class. I made some enemies. Well, to make a long story short, I was fired."

"Well, there I was. I had no skills except teaching, and I had made a mess of that. I couldn't go back to my father. I did the only thing I could think of to do. I started hitchhiking up the coast."

"I did pretty good, in fact. In a few days I got about three miles from Scott's Cove. And then absolutely no one would give me a ride. I must have stood in the same spot for a whole day. I was starving. Finally I decided the

Hell with it. I started to walk.

"After a few miles I noticed a white bird over the ocean. The bird always seemed to stay ahead of me, pacing me. I began to follow it. Once when I had to rest the bird rested too, and when I started up again it started too. I was beginning to wonder if hunger had made me delirious. There were no sounds, no cars on the road, nothing but me and the white bird.

"I climbed a hill. The bird flew on ahead and landed on a woman's shoulder. The woman was holding a bowl of something — a bowl of stew, I saw when I got closer — and she gave it to me. That was Rosa. That was your mother, Timmy."

Matt paused, waiting for a reaction from his son. "Do you understand now, Timmy?" he said. "They gave me the two things I needed most and had been without — food and family. The two most important things in the world. And they gave me a job, building houses with your uncles. Sometimes I look at all the houses on the cliff and I realize that we built them all, and it gives me a feeling — well, I can't explain it. After all that, how could I ever ask them anything? How could I feel anything towards them but gratitude?"

Tim shook his head. "I would have," he said. "I'm going to."

"What do you mean?" Matt said. "You're going to ask your mother?"

Tim nodded. "You know she's — she isn't well, Tim," Matt said. "Please be careful. I wouldn't ask her anything that might bring up bad memories."

"What about me?" Tim said. "Why do I always have to be careful of other people? I need to know, Dad."

"You know," Matt said, "when you left I wondered how college was going to change you. Now I know. I wasn't expecting this, though."

"Should I tell you what I found out?"

Matt smiled crookedly. "No," he said. "That's okay."

"What's the matter?" Tim said. "You're afraid they'll throw you out if you know?"

"You've been taking psychology classes, haven't you?" Matt said. He laughed. "Maybe. Maybe that's it. But you know, they gave me something more than just food and family. They gave me mystery. I wonder if that was the most important thing of all."

Matt stood up. "Got to get to work," he said. "Your uncles will be wondering where I am. Bye, Tim." He left for the construction site.

Tim had to wait until afternoon for his mother to come home. He walked around the house several times, picking things up, putting them down — forks and flowerpots, pictures and cushions and pencil-holders — looking at them as though for the first time. There were no clues in the familiar childhood things.

"Hello, Tim," Rosa said, coming in the door. He followed her to the kitchen. "How was your day?" She began putting the groceries away.

"Okay, I guess," Tim said. "I want to talk to you."

Rosa opened one of the cupboards. "Listen," she said, her back toward him. "You never told me about college. I remember you wanted to go so badly. Was it what you wanted? Were you happy there?" She turned to look at him.

"Yeah," he said reluctantly. His father was right. She looked content, at peace. How could he hurt her? He had no right to ask her anything.

"What was it like?" Rosa said. "It must be very strange — I can't imagine leaving Scott's Cove."

She was giving him an opening. He felt that if he didn't take it he would never have the opportunity again, and the talk would dwindle into safe subjects, Berkeley, his friends. But it was so hard to say the words, to change the balance he had lived with all his life. "But you've been outside Scott's Cove, Mom," he said. "Where were you from?"

Rosa sighed. "A small place," she said. "You've never heard of it."

"But where was it?" he said. "I want to know, Mom."

She sat at the table with him. "Why, Timmy?" she said, trying to smile.

"Why?" he said. "Why not? You've hidden things from me, Mom — all right, maybe not on purpose, but you never told me anything when I was growing up. Ever. I'm tired of it. I don't want any more secrets. If you don't tell me I'm leaving. Going back to school."

"No," Rosa said. "Please. The magic wants you here."

Tim's heart started to pound. His mother had never mentioned magic before. He rubbed his palms on the legs of his jeans to dry them. "That's what Camilla said," Tim said, trying to make himself calm. "I'm sorry, Mom, but I have to ask. What is the magic? Where did it come from?"

"I knew this was going to happen," Rosa said. "I tried to prevent —"

"Why didn't you tell me before, Mom?" Tim said, as gently as he could.

"Why?" Rosa said. "Because I was so — so ashamed —"

Tim looked up, startled. He had imagined dozens of answers to his question, but never that one. "Ashamed of what, Mom?"

Rosa took a deep breath. "All right," she said. "All right, I will tell you.

"Once, we lived in the mountains," she said, as though beginning a bedtime story, "and at the foot of the mountains was an ice-cold lake. We knew nothing of the outside world, and they knew nothing of us. Outside a war, a huge war, the Second World War they called it, had come and gone."

Tim's eyes widened at this. Rosa hurried on. "We knew about the war, of course," she said. "A refugee had come into our village and we fed him and dressed his wound and he told us about it. Marya's year-old son Petr had died the week before, and she had had a dream that he would return. The refugee was named Petr, and Marya adopted him."

This was another surprise. So Petr who owned the grocery store was not really a relative. Tim had never noticed anything different about him.

"Jarisa was our wise-woman then," Rosa said. "She was your grandmother Angelika's sister. She advised us and kept out magic. Jarisa never

left the house. She was afraid of the immensity of the mountains. When she was younger she used to go down into the village and leave a trail of blue beads to help her find her way back, but once someone had taken some of the beads and she wandered, dazed, until Angelika found her. Her house was on a cliff above the village. She watched us and knew the patterns of our lives, and when we had a problem we would climb the cliff stairs to her house. Angelika and Hugo cooked for her and kept her house. She was very wise."

Rosa stopped, started again. At first Tim thought she'd lost the thread of her story. "The feud was long and tangled. After so many years I don't remember all the names of the people. But a girl promised herself to one boy and gave herself to another, and Jarisa had to leave her house to come to the wedding because the family of one of the boys had threatened to use magic. I still remember the fear in Jarisa's eyes, how her hands trembled as she placed the blue beads carefully at each turning of the road. And at the end of the wedding one woman — an innocent woman, Marya's sister — was dead of magic that had gotten out of control, and that evening Jarisa was dead as well. She had died of the weight of the mountains."

She was whispering now. Her accent — the throaty *r*'s, the muted *th*'s — was strong, and Tim could barely understand her. "The magic was freed. It became a plague, like — like some of the things that happened when you were growing up, but worse, a hundred times worse. Animals fell from the sky. The farmlands yielded stars and half-moons. Day became night in an instant, and night became day. Our dreams were all nightmares.

"It was worst of all for me, because I was Jarisa's chosen, meant to succeed her when she died. Only there had been no time to teach me. The madness in me had been small and easily controlled. Now the madness of the wise-woman came on me without warning, and I could not control it. I lived in Jarisa's house now, with Angelika. When I could not help the people with their problems they turned to Angelika, and in time everyone thought of her as the wise-woman.

"Only Angelika remembered that I was Jarisa's chosen. Late at night she would sometimes visit me to see if I had gained my power. Once she warned me as I was about to look in Jarisa's mirror that I would not survive it, and so saved my life. Sometimes she would stand by me when the madness held me and would not let go, when it shook me like a dog shakes a rat.

"The magic became worse. For a while I refused to believe it. Strange lights in the sky were fireflies or shooting stars. We had talked ourselves into seeing the ghosts. I became enraged when no one would play cards with me. But no one wanted to see the future from the way the cards fell.

"Finally we had to flee. You don't know what that means, do you, Timmy? We had lived in the mountains for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. Where could we go? It was many years after the war but refugees still crowded the ports and train stations. And, worst of all, the magic had fol-

lowed us, was a torment to us. We fled across Europe, across the Atlantic, using our magic to gain passage when we had to. And so we came here, to Scott's Cove. The magic is weaker here, not so insistent. But we try not to speak of it. I am too terrified, and no one else wants to remind me of my failure."

Tim sat silent, watching her. After so many years, after the whispers, the secrets, the words spoken quickly in another language, finally he knew. But what could he do with the knowledge? None of his guesses had prepared him for this. He felt wonder and horror and relief, and over everything the old shame he felt whenever he thought of his mother. He knew now why she had never told him the story.

He looked out the kitchen window and was surprised to see that it was still light, that nothing had changed.

Tim opened the door to his grandmother's house carefully. The door opened easily — none of the houses on the cliffs was ever locked. He was hoping his grandmother would not be home.

"Hello, Timmy," Angelika said, walking slowly out of the kitchen. She was wearing gray bedroom slippers. Was she older now, more frail? Had her hair always been that gray? He couldn't tell. "Sit down, sit down. It's nice to see you. What brings you here?"

He wondered if she could hear the pounding of his heart. As a child he had thought she could see him wherever he was, could read his thoughts however hard he tried to conceal them. He sat on the overstuffed sofa, trying not to look at the door and the corridor beyond. "Hello, Nona," he said.

"So. Tell me about college," she said. "Did you like it there? What were you studying?"

Tim swallowed. "Yeah," he said, his throat dry. "I liked it a lot."

"Would you like something to drink?" Angelika asked. "Some lemonade?"

He nodded, and she went into the kitchen. It's no use, he thought, thinking of excuses, wondering how soon he could leave. She knows everything — how can I hope to surprise her? I don't even know if I'm right.

Angelika came back into the living room with the lemonade. "And what are you studying?" she said, sitting next to him. The walk seemed to have tired her a bit, and he felt a little hope.

"Oh, you know," he said. "Didn't Camilla tell you?"

"Camilla?" Angelika said. She looked sharply at Tim. "Camilla calls her mother, yes, and her mother talks to me, but I haven't heard from her since she went away to school. She's a good girl — I'm glad you've been helping her out."

"But you heard about — about the mirror," Tim said. "Camilla told her mother how I broke it."

This time Angelika looked at Tim for three or four long seconds. He had

always thought her eyes were as extraordinary in their own way as Camilla's — grave, piercing, all-knowing. He closed his hand into a fist to keep from blurting out his suspicions. Careful, he thought. She doesn't know how much you know.

"I heard about that, yes," Angelika said. "You don't know how dangerous that was, Timmy, looking into that mirror. You were lucky, very lucky. Much worse could have happened to you."

"Look, I was thinking," Tim said. "I broke it, and I think I know how to fix it. If I can just look at it again —"

"Weren't you listening, Timmy?" Angelika said. Her tone had become serious, almost menacing. "Very few people can look into that mirror without danger. I simply will not let —"

"Like who?" Tim said.

"What?"

"Like who can look into the mirror? My mother, for example?"

"It is none of your business, young man —"

"Of course it's my business!" Tim said, angry now. "I live here, don't I? She's my mother, isn't she?"

The front door opened and, as if summoned by Tim's last words, Rosa stood in the doorway. "Hello, Timmy," Rosa said. "You said you wanted me to meet you here?"

Angelika turned quickly toward the door. "Rosa," she said sharply. "Go home."

"Yeah," Tim said to his mother, almost certain now that his guess had been right. "I want to show you something."

"Timmy, I will not permit —" Angelika said.

"It's still over here, isn't it?" Tim said, ignoring her. "Right off the living room?"

Rosa followed Tim out of the living room and into the hallway. The mirror stood at the end, smaller than Tim remembered. He ran up to it and looked at himself. "Look, Mom!" he said. "I'm in black and white. Look at that!"

"Timmy, I can't — I can't look into that mirror," Rosa said. "I can't do it."

"That's right," Angelika said. She had come up behind them so softly he hadn't heard her. "If she looks into it she will die. And so will you, Timmy."

"Don't you see, Mom?" Tim said. "I'm fine. I looked into it when I was a kid and nothing ever happened. She's lying to you. She lied to you from the beginning, because she wanted to be the wise-woman, because —"

Angelika slapped him, hard. Rosa ran up to her son and took his hand, trying to draw him away from the mirror. But something caught her eye and she looked once into the mirror, and she stood there, transfixed.

The mirror took on color again as Tim watched. His mother's face was orange, then green; her shawl red, then blue. The picture changed and he

saw his father at the construction site looking in astonishment at wood that had turned to marble, nails that had turned to gold. The uncles slowly put down their tools and looked around them, their faces becoming transfigured with hope. Aunt Elsa and Aunt Sonya, talking over tea in Aunt Elsa's kitchen, stopped suddenly and nearly smiled. Aunt Elsa opened the smallest drawer in the kitchen and reached in the very back, and took out a deck of cards. Aunt Sonya's eyes were sparkling.

He saw Camilla sitting in a large lecture hall, staring up because snow had started to fall from the rafters. He saw a blue and green pick-up truck slip smoothly into fourth gear and begin to float inches above the freeway. The waves of the sea turned to feathers and scattered as they hit the cliffs below them.

Rosa fell back, her eyes wide. "I told you!" Angelika said, shouting to be heard over the sounds that suddenly filled the hallway, bells and waves and hammers. "I told you your mother could not look into the mirror. Look what you've done!"

"Mom," Tim said, urgently. She looked at him, unseeing. "Mom. It's okay. Look into the mirror. Control it. You can do it."

"No," Rosa said. "I —"

"Yes," Tim said. "Just this once. And then you'll be okay. You'll never have to do it again. I promise."

Slowly, as though battling against a great wave, Rosa turned her head back to the mirror. The noises stopped, one by one. In the mirror Matt looked at the board in his hands, shrugged and began to hammer again. The aunts exclaimed over the fall of the cards. Camilla turned to her notebook. Renee's truck fell back to the freeway. The waves beat against the cliffs, water once more.

"You did it!" Tim said. "Look, you did it!"

"Yes," Rosa said. She could not look away. "I understand the madness now. All these years, and I had only to look — Why did you do it, Mama? Why?"

Angelika stood still, looking straight ahead. Tears were falling down her lined cheeks but she did not notice. "I thought you could not stand to look, daughter," she said. The picture in the mirror changed again, became a younger Angelika looking out at them like a girl looking from a window. "I was only trying to protect you from the madness. It is not true what this one says. I never wanted to be wise-woman. I —"

"Hush," Rosa said. "Hush, Mama. I understand. Everything is all right now."

"His father is an outsider, and everyone knows they lie. You mustn't believe —" In the middle of a word she seemed to realize she was crying and raised her hands to her face. She looked ten years older.

Rosa took Tim's hand and led him through the living room, outside to the porch where Elsa and Sonya were waiting for them. The three sisters

embraced in the sunlight. The air about Rosa seemed to shimmer, as the magic was drawn into her, and then Scott's Cove became, as Tim had always wished, just an ordinary town.



Well, yes; we are looking for stories, and from people who have never sold a story before as well as from long-time professionals. But no; we do not want to see you make the same mistakes, over and over again. So; we wrote and printed an 11,000-word booklet, *Constructing Scientifiction & Fantasy*, to assist you with manuscript format, cover letters, return envelopes, and other details of story submission, along with some ideas on Plot, Background, Characterization, and Invention. These cost us two dollars each, with mailing and handling; we'd appreciate receiving this amount (check or money order, please; it's never wise to send cash through the mail). If you want two copies, send us \$2.50; three copies, \$3.00; and so on: so it's 50¢ for each *additional copy* after the first one, which is \$2.00. If you subscribe to **Amazing® Stories** today, we'll send you a copy of the booklet free.

Order from us here at **Amazing® Stories**, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

IMPROBABLE BESTIARY: The Kraken

Don't waken the Kraken, whatever you do;
He sleeps in the deeps of the billowing blue.
Take heed; for indeed, what I tell you is true:
You mustn't awaken the Kraken.

The Kraken eats bacon and mulligan stew
And cod fish and scrod fish and mackerel too.
And yet I would bet that he'd rather eat *you!*
So please don't awaken the Kraken.

In the far northern regions the ancient Norwegians
Still speak of the Kraken who plunders their shore:
He rips open ships with his tentacled grips
And he drags sailors down to the dark ocean floor.
No ship can escape him (though many have tried)
For his jaws are so wide twenty men fit inside,
And he chuckles with pride just to think how they died.
A terrible sea-myth,
A monstrous behemoth;
He travels from Norway
To distant Land's End.
(If he's coming *your* way
You've had it, my friend.)

The Kraken has taken a very dim view
Of sailors and whalers; he's gobbled a few.
He'll eat up a fleet and he'll chew on the crew.
So *please* don't awaken the Kraken!

The Kraken, forsaken, befriended by few,
Stays home in the foam of the bottomless blue.
He's lonely; if only some Circus or Zoo
Would offer to take in the Kraken!

With cool calculation the Kraken pretends
He *can't* understand why he cannot make friends.
Yet deep down inside, he is fully aware
Of *why* people never come visit his lair:
It isn't his looks, and it can't be his breath.
Nor is it his handshake (a fate worse than death);
It's just that, when somebody visits, he meets them,
And greets them, and treats them, and seats them
. . . and eats them.
(That shipwreck that happened last week? I've a hunch
The crewmen wound up as a Krakenous lunch.)

Come all ye bold sailors, ye captains and crew.
Beware of the Kraken: he's looking for *you*.
Don't sleep while on duty, because if you do
You might just awake in
The Kraken.

— F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre



URSULA K. LE GUIN: The Lathe of Science Fiction

INTERVIEW

by Baird Searles

If a poll were taken of the *cognoscenti* of science fiction as to the most respected writer in the field, a safe bet would be on Ursula K. Le Guin as the winner. Her first two novels appeared in 1966, a third in 1967, as Ace paperbacks. Also in 1967 rumors began circulating among fantasy aficionados about a Le Guin fantasy published as a juvenile by a small press in California. It was called *A Wizard of Earthsea* and those that tracked it down had high praise for it.

Then, as part of an adventurous series of novels published as "Ace Specials," appeared *The Left Hand of Darkness* in 1969, and Ms. Le Guin became an overnight sensation. One reader remembers clearly thinking, after reading a hundred pages or so, that science fiction would never be the same again. And it wasn't. There was a mature handling of sexuality here unprecedented in the field, as well as a society so extraordinarily extrapolated as to make most other alien cultures look mundane.

That her father was a noted anthropologist and her mother a noted writer (*Ishi In Two Worlds*) explained some but hardly all of this prodigious talent, and later *The Lathe of Heaven*, *The Dispossessed*, and more than a few short stories maintained its reputation. A later unclassifiable novel (*Malafrana*) transcended science fiction. When her stories began appearing in *The New Yorker* (still regarded as a showplace for American *belles lettres* and notably antithetical to SF writers unless Pol-

ish), some science-fiction readers mourned that she had been lost to the field.

Her latest book might put the lie to that, since if it's anything it's science fiction; the question is, can it be labeled at all? *Always Coming Home* appeared from Harper and Row as a daring experiment in publishing; its principal edition is as an oversized paperback packaged with an audio cassette. The book itself was illustrated, and beautifully designed. Its content consists of the portrait of a culture, a culture yet-to-be on the California coast, and it is conveyed through poetry, art, folk stories, written tales, biographies, descriptions of ceremonials, and music (contained on the cassette). Initially intimidating, it turns out to be a fascinating experience for those with the courage to tackle it.

Also intimidating was the chance to meet and talk with Le Guin. Some long-ago correspondence and more recent hearsay led one to expect a modest, intelligent, straightforward, no-nonsense lady known for her anti-sexist stand, among others. But all this respect was nervous-making. Might she be downright formidable, or even churlish, as some of the most respected authors have turned out to be at first hand?

Sitting in a posh, midtown hotel restaurant in Manhattan, Ursula Le Guin looked very much at ease, but not necessarily at home. Her short hair falls into a classic bowl shape, and the

face is surprisingly narrow, and very handsome indeed. The severe gray flannel suit is relieved by a satin blouse of a vibrant teal blue; jewelry is confined to a few simple gold and silver rings. The general effect is what the well-dressed consider well-dressed, and everyone else thinks of as simple.

The handshake is diffident, hardly limp but certainly not hearty; nonaggressive could be the word. The menu and the waiter's accent are deciphered, and after pinning down the variety of the quiche of the day, she orders that. Conversation over the meal ranges widely: her son at Columbia, her musician daughter, the lack of trains in New England and the fact that one must make even short hops by air these days, Hallowe'en celebrations and midsummer bonfires, her upcoming address at her Alma Mater, Radcliffe, and why taxis aren't possible to catch any more in New York ("That's why I requested a car while I was here"). There is a consistent interest in new authors in science fiction, and an obviously sincere desire to check out those she's not familiar with.

After espresso, we retire next door to her publishers, who have kindly provided a vacant office more quietly conducive to tape-recording an interview than the restaurant. On the way, she is greeted heartily by Buz Wyeth, the legendary executive editor of Harper's. "I've been thrown out of my hotel," she announces. (Departing for Boston that afternoon, she's had to meet the obligatory 1:30 check-out time.) "You can always move in here," he says.

Settling down to a serious conversation about her new book in an office decorated with pictures of Jacques Pepin, she pauses and groans at the initial request to describe *Always Coming Home*. "What a terrible thing

to ask," she says, and laughs. Pause again. "It's a book. It's a book with music and pictures. Harper and Row says it's an event. I thought that was a good noncommittal but enthusiastic sort of statement." She also suggests "sensaround" and agrees that "happening" might be a good alternative. "If we could have had dancing with it, we would have."

Seriously, she points out strongly that it's a collaboration. "That's something that novelists don't often get to do with artists in other fields. There were two other forms of art involved, and we all had to agree with what everybody else was doing to make sure that it all made one whole. Of course, I was in charge — I had to be because I thought the whole thing up."

How did she think this whole thing up?

"I wanted to write about this place where I had been, once a year, just about every year of my life. I spent many, many summers there, and it's a place that's very, very dear to me. It truly is my home. I love it. I wanted to get it into a book — to share it with other people. And this was my way of doing it. To put some people in it who seemed to have an affinity with the place — who seemed to grow out of the place. More than we do, who kind of sweep in and change everything. I wanted people sort of coming out of this ground."

She pauses. "So it grew very, very slowly. And it was a matter of listening for voices for a long time, and wondering if the voice was right, and sort of doing this translation from a nonexistent language. And wondering if I translated it right. And then beginning to get a sense of sureness. And then the poetry begins to come through. And then Stone Telling starts telling her story. OK. I'll listen, right?"

Her voice has gotten dramatic, a story-teller's voice. She pauses again, and smiles. "This sounds slightly dingy — it sounds like Joan of Arc hearing voices. But really — that is what, as a writer, the only thing I can compare it to. And Todd [Barton], the composer, says that the music was very like that, too. Of course he read what manuscript I had, which was quite a lot of it by the time he got involved. And then he'd listen for the music, and he'd send it to me and say, 'Does this sound right?' Often I'd say yes. Sometimes I'd say no."

About the various styles of written pieces in the book. "I wanted to do the literature of a people. And they're a people with both an oral and a written literature. So this would be a very rich and varied literature."

There was the matter of the "Pandora" character, whose short pieces throughout the book seemed to be the author speaking about delving into the culture of the Kesh. "Some of her problems are the problems I was having writing it. It's a very self-conscious book in some ways because I am trying to involve the reader in the process of the writing, and in the problems of invention. I am trying to get the reader involved in the book in a way that a reader cannot quite be involved in a simple linear narrative."

Enlarging on that, she gives a metaphor that she has worked out. "Your absolutely straightforward novel/story is like the writer is driving a car, and you the reader get in, and go where the writer takes you. And you go forward — you're going along a road, and maybe you're going to, say, Chicago. In my book — this book is more like a house, and all I do is sort of stand smiling in the doorway and say, 'Come in and move around.' And you go where you want in this house."

"It *does* have a structure. It's not just a scrap bag. At least it's a quilt. But you don't have to read the whole book. And you don't have to start any particular place. If there's something you like you can read it. If you're bored with it, you don't have to. In a sense, the readers would make their own structure. Now this is a lot to ask of a reader, and some readers are going to *hate* it." She looks rather mischievously pleased at the prospect and returns to talking about her collaborators.

Todd Barton is the music director for the Ashland Shakespeare Festival. "He has about a thousand styles in his repertory." He was doing the music for a radio play written by Le Guin and she asked, "Would you be interested in writing the music for this nonexistent race of people? He said 'Yes' just right then. I think he saw what I had seen — the possibilities in this for an artist — the possibilities of inventing a style, which is a lot of fun."

And the pictures? It was Barton who brought Margaret Chodos, the artist, into the project. "She's very young. At that point, a student in art and anthro." Barton showed Le Guin some of Chodos's work. "I said, 'Hey, this is what I want. This is a person who can draw realistically, but with vision.'"

Her voice gets even more enthusiastic. "And the design of the book! By Helene Berinsky. If only Helene could be on the title page. The inside of the book is just stunning."

She even waxes enthusiastic about her publisher, which authors are not necessarily prone to do. "Harper and Row gave me complete say on the project, which is very, very unusual. In fact, to me, unheard of. Every step of this book I was allowed to see and to OK. It was incredible!"

The conversation switches from the

specific to the general, and she laughs at the career description of Ace paperbacks to *The New Yorker*. "It sounds like a Horatio Alger story." But she wants to make clear that her relationship to science fiction is just about what it always was. "This is one of the things I do, is science fiction. One of the things I've done ever since I was first published." She recalls that her first published story was a fantasy, in *Fantastic*, and the next an SF story in *Amazing*. "As soon as I discovered that editors in science fiction would publish what I wrote, I became a science-fiction writer. I don't write *only* science fiction. I don't see why anybody has to be caught in either mainstream or any genre. I'm less involved in the science-fiction scene than I used to be, partly because when you get older, you have less energy. And the science-fiction scene has gotten so big — it's sort of scary to me — huge conventions and so on. So I just go to the small local ones."

She discusses the science-fiction and fantasy writers that she feels have influenced her. "Of course, Dunsany, as a kid. Tolkien, in my 20s. And in science fiction proper, it was Cordwainer Smith who showed me what you could really do with this medium." She recalls that it was reading her first Cordwainer Smith stories that led her to submit to a science-fiction magazine. Austin Tappan Wright's *Islandia* is mentioned. "Now you're getting outside — both Wright and Dinesen. What do you call them? I'd read both by the time I was fifteen or so, and they had a very profound influence."

In both *Always Going Home* and *The Beginning Place*, there are views of contemporary culture which are negative, in one way or another. She enlarges on her feelings about various

aspects of the current scene. "In *The Beginning Place* I was taking off on the suburbs. I've never lived in the suburbs except for one awful year. I'm a city person and a country person. I'm lost and alienated and bitterly unhappy in the suburbs, and that comes out.

"But it isn't contemporary *American* culture that I'm reacting to or trying to find alternatives to in *Always Coming Home*. It's the entire Western-industrial-militaristic society that is going on now."

She then enlarges on a point made in *Always Coming Home*, that from the view of the world of *that* age, there are simply too many people in the world of *this* age. "When you're talking about a whole world, there is, of course, no *one* cause of all the problems. But it does seem to me that increasing human overpopulation makes all problems unsolvable. No matter how many technofixes you have, and no matter how you develop agriculture, if you're going to redouble again within the next ten years, you've had it. People are going to be starving and they're going to be killing each other — for water, let alone food.

"So, yes — it's obviously the great simplification in my book is that we have a world of about the population that the world had in the early Middle Ages, or similar to the human population of North America before the whites arrived."

The conversation switches to working habits. Does she type or word process? "Would you believe notebooks and a pen? I like to write lying down — sometimes on my bed and a lot of time outside in the garden or on the porch. It's really uncomfortable to drag a typewriter and plug it in. I did shift to an electronic typewriter a couple of years ago — the old Underwood

was too heavy. I couldn't lift it. But I write in notebooks and then I put it on the typewriter. The word processor at this point — I don't write in a way that would make it very useful."

There's a very long pause when asked what her interests are aside from writing. Finally, she says, cautiously, "I read a lot. I have certain social and political commitments that I try to keep up with — haven't been doing very well. I *never* do very well when I'm writing. I *do* write. The rest of my life is very dull and very private. It's not very interesting — except to me."

She laughs, and she doesn't really bear down on the word "private," but one takes the hint. A question about her childhood and parents is ventured, though. "I'll quote an interviewer in Toronto who, after asking about that, said, 'You certainly chose your parents well.' That's a lovely way to put it. I chose my parents very, very well. They were nice people, *interesting* people, non-sexist people. A nice middle-class income, but not rich. A very nice upbringing in a nice town — Berkeley."

The conversation veers back into science fiction, and women in science fiction in particular. She leaps in when it's suggested that she was one of the first. "One of the first of the *second* generation. C. L. Moore, Andre Norton, and the others — they were there first. I feel great about what's happened with women and science fiction. Women with any kind of feminist interest, or feeling that things could be different and perhaps better between men and women — in science fiction and outside of science fiction — have discovered that science fiction is this marvelous opportunity for thought experiment and for proposing alternatives. So we have a Doris Lessing coming into it, and Margaret Atwood

using science fiction to make some sort of statement. It's a wonderful field for women to write in, and where women feel very free. Science fiction doesn't have any holds barred — you can say and propose about what you feel. And so many women feel a deep dissatisfaction in the kind of trappedness in the way things are right now. So if you're going to write realistic fiction, it may be kind of unhappy. You may be always feeling that in one way or another, you're criticizing or complaining or showing something that is basically bitterly unpleasant. In science fiction you can escape that bind. You *can* propose alternatives."

On the current state of science fiction as a mass-market medium and best-selling phenomenon: "It's hard to generalize. Sometimes you get sort of cross and impatient because it seems just like a lot of people cashing in. They're not using their heads, they're not using their imaginations. Fantasy, too. These endless trilogies that are just trilogies because it's convenient for the publisher, and not because there's anything inherent in the book that makes it a trilogy. It makes you mad. But at the same time we've got writers like Gene Wolfe writing. How can you say science fiction is doomed when we've got such writers going, who are probably at their height? So it's become very, very complicated.

"It used to be, also, that you could read everybody. You could at least look through the book and think either ychhhh, or wow. But now . . ."

And as for the recent wave of science-fiction movies, one very pithy comment: "Lucas and Spielberg have set written science fiction back twenty years." She adds that it's no coincidence that Reagan's "Star Wars" weapons systems was named for the movie, with its simplistic us-against-

them philosophy.

Finally, does she have any advice for aspiring writers? "Write science fiction because you can *sell* it. It's so hard to get started, particularly with short stories. You can sell novels if you're diligent and have the hide of a rhinoceros, but if you're a short-story writer, I don't know how you get started except in science fiction. I don't know where there are any markets. This is why — I love to do writing workshops, though I can't do as many as I'd like — I will only do it in speculative fiction because I don't like to prepare somebody professionally for a non-existent market. It seems like selling

them down the river." She assumes a tutorial air. "Oh, great, that's a wonderful piece of fiction. Now what are you going to do with it? Put it in a trunk." She looks woeful. "That's terrible. So I'll only do spec-fic."

It's time for her car to whisk her off to the airport, and various drivers standing about on the crowded 52nd St. sidewalk are questioned. No, she wasn't going to Bermuda. Finally, her driver is identified and the car pulls out into the heavy midtown traffic. One thing's for sure. There are still people who *are* respected who actually deserve it.



THE MUTANT RAIN FOREST AT DAYBREAK

The snarevines lower at dawn,
swallowing their flapping morsels
in cups choked with azure feathers.
The treetrunk anaconda
gloats along the riverbank,
digesting a campo and five occupants.
Feigning the sleep of trees,
I sit and watch dawn bleed on the horizon.
Fattened mangoes drop about me
like cannonballs in a never-ending war.

— Robert Frazier

Refractions



Patrick Lucien Price

By looking at the new design for the table of contents, one gets the impression that *Amazing® Stories* has a new future ahead. Yes, that's true: we want to try a different approach. Much of the editorial direction established by the previous editor, George Scithers, will be pursued. We thank George for providing a sound foundation for the magazine as we now attempt to build upon this structure. So, by reconsidering the old and by integrating the new, we are paving a new road for *Amazing Stories*. And it's along this path that we hope you will accompany us.

We want to return to the origins of the magazine: science fiction. Since *Amazing Stories* has its foundation in scientifiction, the primary focus of our story selections will be in the areas of hard and speculative science tales, militaristic science fiction, and space fantasy or opera. In addition, we will continue to offer high and heroic fantasy tales. However, as we get a better feel for what our readers enjoy, we hope to accommodate those tastes accordingly.

Most of our regular features have had their titles changed, though their content remains unaltered. We will, though, let you decipher the play on words indicated in their titles.

As for book and film reviews, well, in this area we want to try something new. Beginning with the November 1986 issue, we will offer a series of thematic reviews. For example, the works of H. P. Lovecraft, militaristic SF, and dinosaurs and similar monsters in contemporary film are among some of the themes under consideration. Additionally, different authors have been asked to appear as guest reviewers. This way, reviewers will analyze a variety of subjects and offer a variety of opinions.

Another new feature is "On Exhibit," which will present the artwork of one of our contributing artists each issue. Realizing that wordsmiths are not the only visionaries in the SF and fantasy fields, we want to provide artists with an opportunity to exhibit a small portfolio of their best works.

We also plan to continue publishing science articles, author interviews, and other nonfiction features each issue. And poetry, too.

We believe that path onto which we're moving will make *Amazing Stories* a more enjoyable read. We hope that you agree. So keep in touch, and let us know what you think! For without *you*, there is no *us*.

ANGEL UNAWARE

by Ted Reynolds
art: Alix Berenzy

When he is not out collecting archipelagoes, Ted Reynolds lives in Ann Arbor, MI.

It seems like a lot more than three hours since the power went off.

It also seems like a lot more than fifteen minutes since I arranged for the eventual "end of life as we know it," unless I'm imagining things, which is certainly more plausible.

Anyway, I'll let others decide whether I'm a Judas or a saint. I'm just not up to that at present.

It would be understandable if I were imagining all this. I couldn't have supposed that a simple power failure, even with its concomitant isolation and uncertainty, would have reduced me to such a state of nerves. As it was, I found myself wandering the isles of the factory, up one side of the line and down the other, dimly lit by the archaic electric bulbs at too widely spaced intervals. (Never thought *they'd* have to be brought back into use.) The robots that were still animate, those on their own batteries rather than on beamed power, were nevertheless still frozen wherever they happened to be when the lights went off and the conveyor line stopped; their eyes followed me, however, as I paced the line.

The natives are restless tonight.

I guess.

Old Joe was the only mobile 'bot this evening, and he was absolutely hyper. As my foreman, he is heavily programmed to worry, and he was worrying. He'd tag along after me like a retarded three-year-old, bugging the Hell out of me, till I'd send him off on some errand or other to get him out of my hair. And then I kept on pacing, and thinking, thinking thoughts that excited, depressed me . . . oh, for, I don't know.

Enough. Let me lay everything out in order. Beginning at the beginning, which has to be when the power went off. I know just where I was at the moment; I'm sure, whoever you are, and assuming you're a survivor, you do too. One doesn't forget such things. Anniversaries, maybe; the fragility of human life and civilization, nyet.

A lot more power had "gone off" than I thought at first, a Hell of a lot more. But let me take it step by step, as I caught onto it myself.

Sometime past the middle of the last century, a small boy was walking home in the twilight somewhere in New England. And he picked up a stick, just for the Hell of it, and flung it at one of those old telephone poles. Just at the instant that stick struck the pole, all the lights in the whole northeastern United States went off. That kid ran home shaking in fear that the adults



would find out he had done it.

Same way, for a few moments I thought *I'd* really done it; I'd just kicked the console to sharpen up the picture coming in from my brother in Vegas, and *everything* flicked out!

But it wasn't me. It wasn't just my cubicle, or even this work level. For a while I figured it was only the whole factory; that is the Bethel Sector 17 Robotry (*Usuforms, Bestiforms, Humaniforms, tailored to your precise robotic needs*) where I work. Where, in fact, nobody works *but* me, unless you were to count the robots, which you don't, of course, although they do all the *work work*, if you know what I mean. Anyway . . .

Anyway.

I spent some time telling old foreman Joe to get his leaden ass in gear and straighten out the factory computer, or else feed in one of the two alternate 'puters; get some lights back on, and some power, so the line could move again, and all those paid-up customers waiting for tomorrow's delivery of tinmen wouldn't be disappointed, and maybe file suit. So off old Joe would shuffle into the deeper innards of number 17, his metal pate catching the dim gleam from each patch of light he passed, until he vanished into the far gloom. And after a long time down on the lower levels of the factory in places I wouldn't be caught dead in, where I imagined bats and spiders and such lying in wait, back he'd come to tell me, no go, the ol' 'puter weren't getting no beam power itself nowadays. No suh, no massa. Whatcha gonna do now?

What to do now? I didn't need old Joe asking me. I knew what I had to do next. No communication with the rest of the world, works stopped dead, nothing heating and lighting the place but standby systems so anachronistic it was a miracle they'd already plodded through half an hour. I was going to have to look out a window. And I didn't much want to.

Not that I'm lazier than the next. But sitting in my swivel chair in my cubicle, up above the work floor, I have everything I need or want ready to hand; fags to left of me, Southern Comfort to right of me, video in front of me tying me in to Megan in Dresden, Cappy in Vegas, Monteith in Jericho, and my old lady in Fuego. Clear view straight down every work aisle, where all the happily bustling little robots make more 'bots, and don't ever let anything go wrong . . . till this evening, at least.

But to look out a window meant four flights up to ground level, and the elevators were out (beam-powered, of course). It was purely an effort to drag myself out of my swivel seat, and I found myself contemplating, for the first time in ages, the desirability of dieting.

"Going up," I told my foreman. "Looking out."

"Very good, sir."

Passing the head of the assembly line, I paused a moment to observe the halted process of robotic construction. The long belt upon which the metallic apparatus was plugged into with limbs, sensoria, and mentalia came to a

crux here, where Matrix gave them what I called their first shot of the Juice of Life, or, more prosaically, slipped into the slot in their napes where a human would have a Medulla Oblongata, the stencilled chip that tuned them into the beamed broadcast power that flooded the globe. Number 5X63Kappa had just passed through Matrix, been powered to mobility, half risen from the belt under instructions to report for instructions, and had been turned off short by the abrupt cessation of the power beam. 5X63Kappa, a quarter ton of unmoving aluminum alloy and fiberglass, had had a very brief life as yet.

I glanced at Matrix herself. Number 5X63Lambda was lying on the belt, head just entering the embrace of Matrix. The protuberances of Matrix which lead me to think of her as female lightly brushed the robot's metal forehead on either side. It was not possible to gauge whether this one had received the power beam before losing it again: if it had ever been conscious, it could only have been for milliseconds.

Conscious! There I went again. I do tend to anthropomorphize computer-programmed heaps of metal.

"Has 5X63Lambda been activated yet?" I asked Matrix.

She didn't reply. Her lights were off. Matrix herself had been on beam power.

I turned to Joe. "Get a battery that will fit Matrix," I ordered. Luckily, she was ancient enough to have a manual backup power slot.

Joe moved off to comply, and I headed for the flight of stairs. At least that task would keep old rust-and-worry from heel-tagging after me.

The stairs up were one long puffing exercise, and then I was at the large ground-level window facing west, which told me a lot I had begun to suspect but hadn't much wanted to know. The dim electric twenty meters behind me cast light onto hard-packed snow, just across the narrow moat separating Bethel 17 from the permapack; beyond the small slice of light there was nothing but kilometer after kilometer of black nothing. Lots and lots of nothing. No Explant 34 Agristation off northwest, no spaced gleams from the Transyukon Slipway further west. Whatever had hit Bethel 17 had also wiped out beamed power over a whopping area of the Arctic. Which had to mean that the main beam relay station north of New Fairbanks had gone crank.

Which didn't figure either, since that 'puter system had backups and safeguards to make the Bethel system look like a kindergartner's finger painting. Sabotage? Who *could* enter the beam system with malicious intent? Lord on a cross, who would *want* to?

So I looked out towards about a thousand kilometers of cold, dark tundra, and thought a bit about how lucky I was to be in a warm, albeit ill-lighted place, when out there whole communities would be not so gradually freezing to death. Me, I was set up to live till power came back, or the Bethel Company came to save their investment, and me in the process. Others, into

the hundreds of thousands, might not be so fortunate.

We slip into thinking of the Arctic as a naturally benign environment for humanity until something like this happens; we don't learn easily. Didn't they think that southern California, with local water enough for a few thousand naked Indians, was a superb locale for tens of millions, till the water mains from the mountains snapped in the fault?

Well, I was safe myself from all but the boredom which lurked right around the corner. A night without video or phone was going to drag. I wished I had a pack of cards, or even a book . . . but who'd ever have foreseen the need?

I took a last look at the clear sky, empty of all but stars, and who needs them, for goshitall. I turned back towards the stairs. I supposed I should look out the south door, but I still didn't want to know the possible worst of it. Nothing I could do about something on this scale. However widespread this catastrophe was, it was already damned sure no one would be knocking on my door tonight.

At which point, somebody came knocking on my door.

A knock on the factory door is broadcast throughout the factory, and the nearest available robot comes to answer it. But in this case the nearest available robot on battery power was probably several flights below ground level, and cataleptized into immobility by the unprecedented circumstances anyway. I was co-opted.

I moved down the dim corridor towards the outer door, wondering who in Hell would choose tonight, of all nights to come a-calling. Santa Claus?

I punched to open the door, without thinking, and then had to physically pull it open and hold it with my shoulder as I peered out.

"Good evening, sir."

It was a dim shape in the gloom, but I did not need the deference to tell me that it was a robot, standing on the portal and stamping the powdery snow off its feet.

"What the Hell do *you* want?" I snapped, but already my attention was caught by the flare I saw over its shoulder, blazing away in the southern sky. I had been, deep-down, afraid of that. I knew what *should* be right up there, 20° above the southern horizon and just an oonch eastwards, a tiny spark of unwinking light that was Powerstat 5. Not this demonic splotch of flame.

"Frugivorous god!" I said, as if there'd been a real person there to say it to. "The whole damned power satellite has gone crank!"

Which made even less sense than if it had been the relay station. They just don't take any chances with the satellite that beams us from the sun the power for a full eighth of the world where 95% of humanity lives.

"Correct, sir," said my new metallic acquaintance. I had nearly forgotten his presence. "The circumterran power satellite number 5 has indeed destructed."

"Why? How?"

"I fear, sir, that information is not yet available."

I looked at it. It was a humaniform, fully human in appearance, and not able to fool anyone for an instant. Not too many of them around, and most of them in government employ, or in the entertainment industry. I had never seen a fully programmed one before, and here was not just this one, but (I saw as my eyes adjusted to the dark) two more full humaniforms appearing from the huddled masses of the bestiforms they had arrived upon.

"Step inside," I commanded, releasing the heavy door with relief to the nearest robot. I turned and walked down the hall, assured they would follow me. They did, strung out behind me like three bows in a kite-tail.

I paused at the head of the flight of stairs and turned to them. Name of a name, for some incomprehensible tinman reason, one of them was carrying a huge snowball, half a meter across, clutched lovingly in its hands. It would have melted in a human grip, but 'bots have cold hands.

"Your purpose here?"

The leading robot, being closest, answered for the three.

"Out of the Geneva Secretariat. Request routine tour of facilities."

"Why in Hell on this of all nights . . . Forget it." Tinmen aren't geared up for changes of program. If they were assigned to inspect Bethel 17 on the 24th, they'd go ahead and do it though the world turned to powder in the meantime. Still . . .

"Sent before or after the power failure?"

"Before, sir."

Irrational though it was, I felt a sudden chill come over me. We got over the Frankenstein syndrome long ago; 'bots do *what* they are told to do, *when* they are told, *as* they are told; they are human constructions pure and simple. But something more primordial was murmuring inside me — suppose they gang up on us — there are more of them than us — computers even, like the one that should have kept Powersat 5 from going wrong, are merely robot minds in place. . . .

Impossible, of course. Not till the laws of physics and the certainties of mathematics change. No way in this world. Not to sweat. Forget it. So . . .

"Down on your knees," I told them. They dropped to the floor like stones.

"Lick my boots," I told the nearest. It nuzzled my foot a bit, which was the best it could do without a proper tongue.

"Roll over," I commanded them all. Three robots scraped their carcasses over the grimy floorplates.

I still felt uneasy. I pointed to the nearest 'bot. "Dismantle it," I told the others.

By the time they had removed its right arm, and unscrewed most of its neck fastenings, I had relented. After all, he did represent a hefty segment of my own taxes.

"Follow me," I said.

They traipsed after me down the gloomy steps, Numero Uno carrying its right hand in its left, and its neck plates creaking with each downward step; and Duo still carrying that ridiculous snowball.

On the work level, my foreman was still hovering where I had left him, and Matrix's lights were glowing, showing that she was now working on battery power. I called Joe to me, and he came over, moving with that silence which is uncanny in his eight-foot frame.

"Joe, these flunkies want a guided tour. Tour 'em."

"Yes, sir."

And up in my cubicle, a ringing began.

It took me more than a moment to figure out what the sound was. The telephone was even more out-of-date than the electric lights. It had been uselessly cluttering up my desk for months before I had finally stashed it away in . . . under . . . where the Hell *had* I stowed it, I wondered in irritation, as I stumbled around my cubicle, trying to track down the source of the ringing. I had just about zeroed in on the southeast file cabinets when the sound stopped short.

I sat down in my swivel chair to catch my breath. Out in the dark factory nothing moved. I stood up again and peered out. Joe stood unmoving at the head of the stopped conveyor belt. The three strange 'bots were nowhere to be seen.

I stormed asthmatically out to where Joe slumped beside Matrix.

"Where did they go? The Geneva robots?"

"They left, sir," Joe said calmly, slowly nodding his gleaming carapace.

"They said they'd seen all they'd wanted to see."

"Already?" I asked, surprised. How odd. "Did they say anything else?"

Joe was slow to answer. "Just that this was the place, all right."

"This is the place, all right," I repeated meditatively. "Joe, I don't think I like this very much. No, I don't think I like this at all."

I looked down at the unmoving belt. It was as before, but for one thing. Placed carefully at the head of the dormant 5X63Lambda lay the now slowly melting snowball brought by one of the visiting tinmen. A growing puddle of water spread on the floorplates beneath the line.

Matrix was humming softly to herself.

I spoke to her; "Matrix, baby."

"Yes, sir." Her voice was clear and sweet, programmed in from some Vegas starlet of earlier decades, no doubt.

"Are you now fully operative?"

A pause. "I believe so, sir. There was a sudden cessation of power input for an indefinite time."

"But you're all right now?"

"I believe so, sir."

"The unit at present within your domain," I asked, "Number

5X63Lambda. Has it been activated yet?"

"I am not sure, sir," crooned Matrix. "I was activating the unit at the moment the power ceased. I have not been instructed to resume activities."

"Good. Evaluate the unit in question."

"Excellent condition, sir," said Matrix at once. "Fulfilling all intended parameters and all necessary functions at potential optimum. You will want to keep this one."

"Oh, you want to keep all of them. When did you ever reject a unit? You bring 'em to life; the testing complex will decide to keep or scrap them."

"This is a very good unit," Matrix repeated; I detected a wistful note in her surrogate voice. "You'll want to keep this one."

I looked at the unit under discussion. It was a semi-humaniform, with all functional elements present, but lacking the personalized grooves, shades, and wrinkles of units destined for government or entertainment service. It lay inanimate, cut off from the beam power that would vivify it. Calipered to precision, measured to micrometers of tolerance for its tasks, it lay before me sublimely indifferent to the controversy between man and machine about whether or not it had, or should be, born. Actually I found it rather ugly. But then, aren't they all?

The sort of pile of junk metal that only a Matrix could love. "Well," I hedged, "we'll see. Just keep holding on to it for now."

"If it had a battery, it could talk to me," Matrix suggested.

The thought startled me. True enough, the meaningless chit-chat of the 'bots had ceased with the power failure; even the few still animate on battery power were frozen and dumb from lack of incentive in this unprogrammed situation. Only dumb old, worrisome Joe . . .

"Not now, Matrix honey," I told her as I moved on.

The telephone rang again. I'd been damned well sure it would.

I was ready for it this time. In thirty seconds I'd tracked down the file drawer it was stashed in and lifted the ridiculous earpiece to my ear.

"Bethel Sector 17 Robotry," I said inanely.

"David," came the voice of Kipps in Geneva. "How are conditions there? Report!"

"All fine and crackerjack dandy," I said, a bit miffed. "Just slogging along through the dark ages. Nothing moving, who cares, you guys are paying me for every second of it, and at hardship rates, too. Now get the power on, or get me the Hell out of here."

Kipps's voice crackled in my ear, and even without video, I could see his face turning that familiar shade of red. "Slice that, Dave, this is serious! You don't know what we've been through, just trying to reach you. If someone hadn't remembered this old backup system . . . and then we had to figure out what your phone *number* was, for blue hades. . . . Anyway, a team's on the way out there, but right now, Dave, what you've got to do . . ."

"A team?" I interrupted. "I just need power back . . . or else a lift back to Toronto."

"Look, Dave, what you've got to do is turn off every robot in the factory right away. All of them."

"They are off, 90% of them," I snapped in frustration. "I need them on again, not off."

"Listen to me, will you!" Kipps said sharply. "We've reason to be worried. You must know that Powersat 5 blew this evening. That means no power for the whole northern continent, but also . . . it sent a surge of random power through the beam in the instant it went that, well, we just aren't sure what it may have done to any robot on beam power at that instant."

"How *could* a Powersat possibly blow up?"

Kipp's voice dropped. "I shouldn't tell you, Dave, but you've got to realize how important this is. Yesterday the techs up on 5 reported that the satellite computer had reinterpreted its own basic decision-making parameters."

"Reinterpreted? How?"

If close-mouthed Kipps was telling me this stuff, it *was* serious. I could almost see him wincing with pain as he forced classified information out of reluctant lips.

"You know the computers, like all 'bots, have to act to maximize the good of human beings. Well, the 5 computer came to the conclusion that robots were human beings too."

"What!!! That's insane!"

"Exactly. The techs were ordered to disconnect the computer at once and run the power beam manually. We suppose they tried to turn the computer off and . . . it blew. No one's left alive up there to tell us more."

I sat still, feeling the beginnings of chill creep over me. How would a computer go about maximizing the good of a vast majority of soulless metal constructs, and a minority of flesh creators? Through its own self-destruction? Oh, oh . . .

"Is there . . . trouble with the 'bots?"

"Not real trouble; not yet. But they're, well, restless. Worldwide, they're acting . . . strange. Like they're waiting for something."

"That's pretty scary."

"Telling *us*? Listen, Dave. All over the world tonight, without contact that we know of, 'bots are talking to each other about . . . well, about Bethel 17, and something happening there. They're turning towards *you*, by God . . . everywhere. David, turn every damn robot there off *now*."

I sat, cold as ice.

"Sure," I was saying. "No sweat. All off, no trouble."

"A crack team will arrive within the hour, I hope. Damn antiquated pre-beam aircraft, hope they make it. Then we'll take the whole bunch apart. Got it?"

"Got it."

His voice cut off, and the ear-thing was silent. Then a high-pitched whine assaulted my ear. I presumed Kipps had gone off line. I had no idea what to do with the phone apparatus after use. After a moment's thought, I pitched it into the wastebin.

I descended to the workfloor, and crossed to Matrix. The snowball at the head of 5X63Lambda had mostly thawed, revealing something metallic within. I supposed I should dunk the whole mess in a bucket of something in case it was a bomb. I reached down, brushed away the slush, and picked up the objects, one at a time.

A small bar of metal, maybe iridium; I don't know many metals, so when I see an unfamiliar one, I assume it's probably iridium.

A short flask which, unstoppered, smelled of oil. No markings reading DRINK ME or anything else.

A thin disk of plastic which, sprung open, revealed what a sniff suggested was metal polish.

Gifts?

"Joe."

He was there. "Yes, sir."

"We're supposed to turn off all the robots still animate."

"Yes, sir."

"A team's arriving soon to dismantle every robot in this factory."

"Yes, sir."

"You too, Joe."

". . . Yes, sir." I wasn't sure I'd detected a pause before his response.

I jabbed a finger at the dormant 5X63 Lambda. "This one, too."

Joe said nothing. His face, undesignated to register thought or emotion, registered none.

As I hadn't yet actually ordered him to turn off the other robots, he waited.

"Joe!"

"Yes, sir."

"Hit me."

No response. Joe remained frozen two feet from me.

"I said hit me, Joe. Hard."

Joe shuffled in place. "I can't, sir."

"I order you to hit me as hard as you can, Joe."

He half turned to one side and then the other, the picture of unexpressible agony of indecision. "I cannot hit you, sir. You know I cannot."

If he could have hit me, I would have been dead already. I grabbed his shoulder and halted his swaying. "Then swear at me!"

"Sir?!"

"You heard me. Swear at me! I command it. Tell me what you really think of me!"

Joe's mouth opened, a veritable steel trap. He tried three times before

utterance emerged. The pitch was as even as ever; his voice box resonated only to one tone.

"You . . . fleshie!"

He took a step back, astounded at his own words, and then took courage.

"You *damned* fleshie! You eater! Shitter! You . . . you *breather*!"

His fingers, I noticed, were flexing spasmodically.

"Good enough," I sighed. "That about sums up the differences, I guess. About what I should have expected. Now get a battery-operated usuform or bestiform that can make it up those stairs."

Joe still stood facing me. "What do you want of me?"

"Something sturdy enough for three robots, or for two at least," I detailed. "You can carry your own weight, I suppose. Hurry!"

As Joe retreated into the depths of the building, I began to turn off the other tinmen. *Began* to. I didn't get far. The 5X63 series, 5Ws and Vs, 83R4Alpha, 54T6Gamma, all eyeing me out of the corners of their optics, and saying nothing at all. Johnnie, I hardly knew thee. I gave it up.

Like I said, I tend to anthropomorphize a lot.

When Joe returned, followed by a lowgrade asinoform 'bot, I led him back to the head of the production line. I looked down at the unmoving 5X63Lambda, the robot that the three visitors had gifted, that Matrix had protected, the one that had been in process of activation, of birth, when that violent surge of random power swept across the world. Or how random had it been? Just how transformed could this particular robot turn out?

At my instructions, Joe tenderly lifted 5X63Lambda and placed him longitudinally upon the asinoform, and strapped him down securely. Then I had him unbolt Matrix and strap her by 5X63Lambda's head, clasping him in her own way.

Finally I was satisfied. I drummed my fingers on the metal of the conveyor belt and then said,

"Very good, Joe. Now get the Hell out of here, the three of you."

"I am not sure I understand," said Joe. "Where are we to go? What are we to do?"

I glared at him. "You're to go outside into that . . . that cold, that snow, that wilderness. Survive, the three of you. Somehow. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"These others," I waved my hand at the silent 'bots about us, "I can do nothing for. I'm an idiot for doing this much. Don't let me down. Somewhere you'll find your Egypt. Stay there."

"How long, sir?"

I wondered myself. "Till they are dead which seek the young child's life."

Long after the stolid mount and the three 'bots had vanished into the night frost I stood, pondering my decision, gazing on the blazing fire like a cryptic sign in the sky.

I did not know if there was a feeling soul within a robot, a kind of human being trapped in metal. I hated to even think it. It didn't seem at all likely to me. I didn't know how one could be sure.

But I didn't have to be sure, because that wasn't the issue. I did know this; if I thought exactly what I was told to think, believed and felt precisely as I was taught, obeyed unquestioningly all the commands I was given, then I was the robot.

And I refused to be a robot. Or if I were, I should be God's robot; not Geneva's.

At last I shrugged my shoulders. It was very cold. I'd better get back inside.

I suppose if what I suspect is true, I am a traitor to my own kind.

Still, what the Hell, it's Christmas.

So, shutting the door firmly, I came back here to my swivel chair, where I sit, smoking my fags, drinking my booze, and waiting the arrival of King Herod's stormtroopers.



MOVING?

If you're a subscriber to AMAZING® Stories and you're planning to move, remember that you have to tell us your new address in advance to guarantee uninterrupted delivery of your subscription. Give us at least 4 weeks' notice (6 weeks is even better), and inform us both of your old and your new addresses with a simple note or postcard, or by filling out and sending us one of the change-of-address cards available at your post office.

Send your change-of-address notification to AMAZING® Stories, Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147.

IN A SEASON OF CALM WEATHER

by Ruth Berman

art: Nicholas Jainschigg



As a child, Ruth Berman had the perfectly normal experience of having Alice and the "Oz" books read to her at bedtime, chapter by chapter. (Subsequently she read them to the younger children in her family.) She allows as how her imagination is more or less permanently, so to speak, snarked.

Several dozen of her stories have appeared in almost as many publications; this is her first in Amazing®.

Alice and Wendy and Dorothy walked arm in arm over the beach beside a sea they could not agree in naming. Rainbows sparkled in the tops of the waves as they over-balanced and plunged to earth. Wendy and Dorothy disagreed as to which was more unlikely, land or sea.

"But of course it's Neverland," said Wendy. "The sea never had a name that Peter told me."

"Oh, the land's here, sure enough," said Dorothy. "It's just the ocean between here and civilized countries that could never be navigated. That's why it is the Nonestic Ocean."

Alice waited politely a moment, but the other girls had come to an impasse in their dispute, and Alice said, "No, that's just why it *isn't*. Neither of them is. One wouldn't name it wasn't if it were, you know."

Both Wendy and Dorothy were inclined to argue this judgment as incorrect and incomprehensible, but far ahead they saw a ring of wet little creatures running round and round, and they stopped talking to look. In the middle of the creatures were a walrus and a man with a work bench. The man was planing what was evidently a very knotty piece of wood, and the walrus, lolling with its hind-flippers in the air, was evidently giving unwanted advice. Neither of them paid any attention to the creatures racing round the oval of which they were the foci.

Wendy and Dorothy, reconsidering, asked Alice what the sea was.

"Tears," she said.

But this answer they would not allow, and they broke apart to enjoy the pleasure of racing the wave-edge, trying how close they could come without getting drenched.

When all had lost, they found a warm, dry rock to climb, where they could sit in the light. Wendy, a little nervously, walked all the way round it first and checked that its top was over the high-tide line before scrambling up after them.

"Now we're taller than he is," said Dorothy, pointing at the carpenter.

"That isn't very much, perhaps," said Alice thoughtfully.

Dorothy laughed. "It'll do," she suggested.

"Not always," said Wendy.

"Why not?" Dorothy said.

"Oh, well. One does want to grow up in the end, you know." Wendy lowered her voice on these words, as if expecting disagreement.

"I don't know," said Alice. "I've tried growing, and I didn't care for it." She frowned. "If one could take one's time at it, I think one might like it."

Dorothy leaned back on her hands and looked out over the water. Something that might have been a dolphin or a mermaid had jumped. The tail flashed purple in the light as it disappeared beneath the wave. "It's nice here," she said.

Wendy started to nod agreement, but then gasped as she looked farther out to sea. A sail was rising up over the horizon. She could not yet see the

ship, but she cried, "Pirates!"

"The *Crescent Moon*!" said Dorothy.

"The Bellman?" said Alice. She stood tiptoe, trying to see, and fell. Wendy tried to catch her, and dropped off the rock, too.


"— don't you agree?"

Wendy took a sip of tea to cover her confusion. Really, she would never be used to having the dear old Bloomsbury neighbourhood in the mode. But even with a neighbour less formidable than Mrs. Woolf, it was not right to doze off while giving a little party. If that was what she had done. She looked nervously at the elderly woman beside her. Mrs . . . Mrs. Hargreaves, that was it. She cleared her throat, trying to think what to say.

Mrs. Hargreaves hesitated, apparently as much at a loss as herself, picked up the teapot and passed it to Mrs. Woolf. "Won't you have some more tea?" she said, and in moving cups about the conversation made a new start.

Wendy would have been grateful, but as the tea-party entered the domains of civility, she lost the threads of the dream or daydream or whatever it had been. She sighed, and Mrs. Hargreaves sighed, and they talked about modern art.

Dorothy, left alone, tried jumping down, but she was still on the beach beside the sea. The ship was too far out to signal. The walrus and its companion did not look as if they would be well able to give her directions. On the other side of the beach, all she saw were a little boy and girl building sand castles and, beyond them, a man in a white suit, eating a peach. The juice was dripping off his chin. When he saw that she saw him, he turned red, dropped the peach, and strolled in the opposite direction, trying unsuccessfully to look nonchalant.

Dorothy walked inland to look for a way across the desert back to Oz, where they do not grow old. 

Kleinisms

The length of the landing gear is governed by the fact that it must touch the ground.

It is as logical to put an air-cooled engine in a submarine as it is to put a liquid-cooled engine in an airplane.

— Professor Arthur L. Klein (1898-1983)

The logo features the words "ONE-ON-ONE" in a stylized, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white with black outlines and are arranged in a way that suggests they are part of a larger, three-dimensional structure, possibly a book cover or a game box. The letters are slightly tilted and overlap, giving it a dynamic feel.

ONE-ON-ONE™ ADVENTURE GAMEBOOKS

by James M. Ward

The ONE-ON-ONE Gamebooks are self-contained role-playing games for two people. Each player becomes the central character in one of the two books. Each book portrays the adventure, step by step, as the two characters stalk each other through a dangerous environment until they reach the final combat!

Play anytime!

Play anywhere!

Play many times!

CASTLE ARCANIA

You are the gallant knight or the powerful wizard, each searching for other in the magical ruins of Castle Arcania.

BATTLE FOR THE ANCIENT ROBOT

You are the human star pilot or the killer robot, racing through space in a desperate search for the powerful parts of the Ancient Robot.

REVENGE OF THE RED DRAGON

You are the vengeful red dragon or the marauding black knight who raided the dragon's lair.

CHALLENGE OF DRUID'S GROVE

A game for two high-level magic-users.

Boxed set of two books includes everything needed to play. All you provide is paper, two pencils, and one friend.

Suggested retail price: \$5.95. Available at fine book and hobby stores.



DEATH- SHADE

by Larry Walker
art: Hank Jankus



Larry Walker would like us to believe that he resembles his main character. He is a dour Scandinavian who has moved from his northern homeland (Minnesota) to an exotic place (Florida). He has never been an assassin, but has been a radio announcer.

His "One Final Dragon" appeared in our November 1984 issue.

The little man in the blush-colored robe chased me a long time. I had to slow down so he wouldn't lose me in the dark.

I led him through Constantinople's poorer streets. The raw Tramontana wind pushed us here and fought us there, as if herding us. The little man stumbled over a drunk. A prostitute tugged his sleeve. He ran faster.

I let him catch me in the shadow of an old tower. It was part of Constantine's wall, long replaced by the great wall further west. Now it was a sail-maker's shop. The shop was closed, but the door was open.

He slapped me, and I whimpered, "I don't know the man!"

"Don't lie to me, whelp! I paid plenty to find you! 'A boy called Ring,' they said."

He squeezed my throat. He had a hand like a baby's.

"Up there! In the tower!" I gasped.

"What kind of fool do you think I am?"

I didn't say. I squealed, "No, I swear it's true! He meets people there!"

He squinted up. I could smell his fear.

"You go first," he said at last. He pushed me through the door.

I raced up the steps, then stood in the hatchway where he could see me against the stars. "Nothing to it!" I called.

It took him a little longer.

His forehead gleamed when he reached the top.

"Where is he, then?" he panted.

A tall man stepped from the shadow of a merlon. He stood lean and wide-shouldered, dressed all in black.

"You're the one they call the Death-Shade?" the little man asked. "You're the one who kills for gold?"

The tall man said nothing.

"I have a job for you! I must be rid of my wife! I'll pay whatever you ask. I'm desperate!"

The tall man held a hand out.

"Good-faith money, yes," the little man said. "How much? Ten nomismata — twenty? I can pay!" He fumbled a purse out.

The tall man caught his shoulder with a big hand.

"What — what — what —"

The tall man punched him in the stomach and cut off his voice. Then he

tossed him over the parapet.

I stepped to the tall man. He stood there leaning, looking out, his face as gray as his hair. The City lay strewn below us like jewels on black velvet.

"A plain suicide," I said. "Well done, my lord Thorolf?"

He said nothing.

I lowered my voice. "We could fly the City. We could visit your homeland. I like blonde girls."

If he heard, he gave no sign.

"Don't be like this!" I whispered. "What's gnawing you? The man was a toad — his family bought his blood. You've done a good deed!"

I might have been talking to my shadow.

"He needed killing! Why mourn a villain?"

My lord Thorolf snorted. It echoed in his big nose as if in Sophia's dome.

He went down. I followed.

I think it started in April, after the fire. Romanus IV was Emperor then, about a year before the awful defeat at Manzikert.

Thorolf stopped eating. The gray bear became a wolf, blue eyes aglow. He paced the Persian carpet, or sat on the balcony, staring for hours at the Sea of Marmara. They deserved each other, one as gray and restless as the other.

In May, one of the Emperor's chief eunuchs died suddenly. He'd been meant to die slowly. I wondered.

In July, a land-owning noble took a sudden trip to Trebizond and stayed there. He'd had a date with a falling balcony. I worried.

But it wasn't until November, the morning after the little man died, that I decided to betray my master. That was the morning he told me I'd be getting reading lessons.

Enough is enough.

Basil, the middle-man, lived near the Palace, not far from the Perfumers' Bazaar, where he was a guild member. It's a nice neighborhood if you fancy smothering in myrrh.

I found him in his study, lounging on a couch. He shook his dark, bony head when I told my story.

"We must go to the Deacon," he said.

I yelped and tried to run, but he caught me and changed my mind with a riding crop.

It wasn't fair. Nothing had ever been.

Thorolf named me Ring. He said there was a king of that name in his land once.

Hah.

"You don't have to bring me," I whimpered as Basil pushed me down the Mesé, past shops full of wares I'd never be able to afford, past rich men and beggars, none of whom pitied me. "I'm not important."

"How true?"

"I don't want to know where the Deacon lives!"

I thought his fingers would break my shoulder. "Don't say that name!" he hissed. "Never even whisper it where people can hear!"

He beat me again.

"I don't want to go!" I whined.

"And what has that to do with anything?"

I went along, my stomach churning, my legs quivering. I prayed silently, vowing to become a monk if I could just get free.

All business in the City is run by guilds. There is a guild, hereditary and regulated by law, for every honest trade and craft.

For other trades and crafts, there was the Guild of the Rat, regulated by the Deacon.

The Deacon, who knew the words whispered in locked rooms. The Deacon, who could arrange any death, up to and including the Emperor's. The Deacon, who, they said, did business at a profit with Hell itself (well, some people will believe anything).

The Deacon, who could not afford to let unimportant people know his address.

Basil steered me to the waterfront. Midway down a narrow street he pushed me through a low door, into a warehouse.

We passed between walls of cloth, rolls of silks and brocades that had never been touched by the Clothiers' Guild. At the far end a fat man sat at a desk, writing in a ledger. Basil said to him, "Three to see the Deacon."

The man raised two fingers.

"Four to see the Deacon," said Basil.

The fat man nodded. He brought out a key and stepped behind a hanging. A door creaked, and Basil pushed me through, down a flight of steps and out another door.

Basil had a lamp, and by its light I saw a marvel — one of the cisterns of Constantinople. Huge and vaulted like Neptune's Palace, its pillars reflected back in the water, it seemed forever. Our footsteps echoed and echoed.

He pushed me along a ledge. After some walking he stopped and ran his hand down a crack in the stonework. A bronze lever popped out at him. He pressed it down and a section of the wall tilted and swung up, back over our heads.

I gasped and crossed myself. Basil laughed. "Levers and weights, boy — natural philosophy. Magic comes later."

The entrance room was as richly beautified as a church, from the pavement below to the mosaics and frescoes above. They showed quiet country scenes, and rats at play.

Skilled workmen had labored here. I could guess their wage.

A maid came and took Basil's cloak. She wore Turkish harem clothes. I

suppose I stared.

"Like her?" Basil whispered as she walked away. "She has no tongue, like the man in the warehouse. The Deacon wants his servants discreet."

We passed into a roofed courtyard. The artisans had done their magic above, crafting a night sky, stars of gold on midnight blue. A hundred oil lamps hung from chains around the colonnade, thinning the underworld night.

At the center was a statuary fountain, a table loaded with fruit and wine, and a couch. A fat, hairless man sat there, caressing a ball of crystal.

The Deacon was a eunuch. I might have guessed.

"Welcome Basil, welcome Ring," he squeaked. "You may approach."

I didn't like his knowing my name. Being noticed is unhealthy.

The Deacon beamed. "What brings you here when you could be out seducing virgins? Hey?" He giggled and set the crystal aside.

I hurried forward and kissed the golden hem of his robe.

The Deacon drew me up to face him, on my knees. "Comely lad," he said. "Fresh. Full of juices. Sow a lot of oats, do you boy? Whenever you get the chance? Hey?" He giggled again.

"The boy has a story to tell," said Basil.

"I'll bet he does! Lots of them! Hey? Hey?"

"About Thorolf?"

"A dull story then." He released me and I groveled. "But I'd best hear it. I've worried over my Death-Shade lately. I try to watch him in the Crystal, but he's so dour and dumb." He took up the ball again and gazed at it. It had a green discoloration. It looked like a giant's eyeball staring back.

I told him everything.

When I was done he said, "You're a slave, Ring, and you know nothing."

"True, oh Emperor of Rats," I said, my forehead on the floor.

"On top of that, you're a blooming boy, full of rising sap, which unbalances the humours, making you doubly stupid. One or two murders fell out wrong. It happens. And as for the reading lessons, what of it? Perhaps he wishes you to read to him of military tactics. Or poisons. Or magic."

"He's been seeing a hermit in the hills, glorious one," I said to the floor. "The hermit gave him a book. From the pictures I know it's about Saints' Lives.

"I saw him slip into a church once — just to stand in back and watch, but he did watch. For all I know, he's made confession."

The Deacon sneezed. "Hard to believe," he said.

"I think it started with the fire, oh Brighter-than-the-Sun."

"Ah, the arson-murder in April."

"The target's children died. They weren't supposed to be at home that night."

"Yes?"

"My lord Thorolf dislikes killing children."

"Really? You're not making this up? How very odd."

He looked at Basil. "I see no regret in your face," he said. "But of course you want to be Death-Shade yourself."

"And you, boy — what do you want? Well, I know what you want, of course — boys will be boys, hey? — but what reward do you expect for betraying your master? Thirty pieces of silver?"

His meaning passed me by. "I only want to go on serving the Death-Shade, oh Greater-than-Rome," I said, peering up like a dog.

"You think Basil will be as open-handed as Thorolf?"

"His generosity is legend." "Myth" would have been nearer the mark, but we make do.

The Deacon lifted his crystal over his head. He set it spinning and took his hand away. It hung there like an expensive moon, flashing gold and green.

He gave us instructions. I was overjoyed to find that they called for me to live a little longer.

Thorolf's house stood near the Forum of Theodosius. By law, a foreigner shouldn't have been able to settle in the City, but when he left the Varangian Guard for the Deacon's service, a special permit had appeared, along with a guild membership as an amber merchant. The amber shop existed. I'd been there once.

I found him on the balcony, in spite of the Tramontana. He was taking a hone to one of his daggers. I'd seen him do that for hours, *scrape, scrape*, his thoughts God-knew-where.

"I have something for you, my lord." I spoke quietly, for he disliked interruptions.

He rumbled at me, and without turning his head reached a hand back.

I gave him what the Deacon had sent. A shawl with a knot in it.

Thorolf untied the knot. Inside he found a woman's ring.

A second later he had me by the throat.

"WHO?"

"A boy gave it to me in the street! He said he knew I served you, and that you'd know what to do. He said he came from the Deacon."

He knocked me against the doorpost and bolted inside. He donned his working clothes, black cloak over black silk and leather. The cloak hid the forbidden short sword on his left hip, and two or three daggers.

I waited on the balcony, keeping out of sight. But he stepped out and beckoned.

He led the way through windy night streets, toward the neighborhood of the Church of the Apostles. I followed sadly. I hated to lose a good master, for Thorolf rarely beat me, besides being generous. But worse to know that unless I served the Deacon very well that night I was as dead as he. It wasn't fair. Nothing had ever been.

We ended before the blank face of a wealthy house. Thorolf stopped under the doorway arch, as if unsure.

He tested the latch. The door swung open.

He drew his sword and leaned in.

A white arm struck him across the face.

He fell back over the step, landing on me. I was lost in black silk for a second. When I got free I screamed.

A naked corpse loomed over us.

It wasn't a new corpse. Its jaw hung slack, and bugs crawled around its mouth and eyes. The smell hit me like an anvil. The thing took a step, puppet-fashion.

Thorolf was up now, sword ready. He struck it across the belly, but the loop of gut and maggots that slipped out didn't seem to bother it.

"Let's go!" I tugged on Thorolf's cloak, forgetting my orders.

He ignored me.

I scurried a few feet off. "You're crazy!" I said. It's permitted to insult your master when he's about to die, if nobody else can hear.

The corpse reached out at him.

Thorolf swung and cut the right arm off. It fell to the street and jerked.

The other arm stretched.

Thorolf struck it off.

Voiceless, the dead man made a screaming face, looking angry and confused.

Thorolf moved closer. I stepped in too. What could it do now? And what would the Deacon do?

A skinny white arm shot from the corpse's mouth and caught Thorolf by the throat. He dropped his sword and grabbed the arm. It held him fast.

Thorolf thrashed about, gasping and fighting, beating at the arm.

His struggles weakened.

He dropped his hands. He fumbled in his belt and brought out a little knife.

He swung it up and missed the arm.

He swung again, and again he missed. His face was blue now. His toes were off the ground.

The third time he struck.

A pig-squeal cut the wind. The corpse jaws gaped wide, unleashing a stench, unhinging. A long-armed creature, the size of a monkey, with high, pointed ears, leaped out.

The corpse fell in its tracks.

The little white thing ran down the street, clutching one arm and gibbering. It knocked me down and ran me over. I thought someone had hit me with the Hippodrome.

I crawled to Thorolf, who lay gasping beside the corpse. I looked at the little knife in his hand.

Silver, of course.

Always use silver on demons.

I could have killed my master then, and proved myself to the Deacon.

I didn't. Nobody had told me to think.

Thorolf rose at last and took up his sword. He cut the corpse's head off and threw it as far as he could. Then he went to the door.

I had an urge to warn him. I fought it down.

I followed inside. It was a big house. We looked in every room around the courtyard, then upstairs.

All empty.

In one bedroom he caught me filching a silver hair brush. He boxed my ears.

The girl was in a bed in the last room.

She lay on her back. She was dark and slender, and about my age, and I loved her on sight. As I mentioned, I like dark girls. When she saw us, she fled into a corner.

Thorolf stood and stared at her. I joined him.

He said, "My name is Thorolf —"

She screamed and fainted.

Not a bad response, but how did she know he was an amateur mute?

Thorolf went to her, and knelt, and stroked her hair.

A sudden hand from behind covered my mouth. I twisted to see Basil's face over my shoulder. He held a finger to his lips, and when I nodded he released me.

Gliding over the carpet to Thorolf, he clubbed him with a dagger handle. Thorolf fell on top of the girl.

Basil gave a short whistle. Two slaves pounded in.

"The Dead-Walker failed," Basil told me. "Fortunately, the Deacon takes no chances. You —" he said to the slaves, "disarm him and carry them both. We're all going to the Deacon."

I suppose the Deacon saw himself as a kind of under-Emperor. He had a chamber set up as an audience room, complete with a throne flanked by golden rats.

The slaves dropped Thorolf, bound hand and foot, before him on the dais. The Deacon stared at Thorolf, his chin in one hand, his crystal in the other.

"This perfectly illustrates my dilemma," he squeaked. "Demons make poor murderers, and are often unequal to a skilled man.

"But men are so unreliable!

"I'm big enough to admit that I mistook you, Thorolf. I've always counted on men's need to rebel, their lust to defy morals.

"But you're a barbarian, raised to wickedness. You rebelled by *taking up* morals. It's something to remember when I next deal with your kind.

"Ah, Thorolf, you were a sweet killer, but so dull! Your talk was terse, and your fornications no fun at all, hey? I think I'll not miss you much."

He rose. "This is our judgment, then. You will die, and slowly, as an example to the rest of the Guild. I think it's especially important that the boy should see, since he will serve me —"

Relief turned my knees to water.

"— as a eunuch."

I fainted.

It wasn't fair. Nothing had ever been.

I woke in an iron cage, in one corner of an ill-lit chamber cluttered with sharp instruments and serious-looking machines. The girl huddled in the cage's farthest corner.

The Deacon stood at the center of the chamber, with Basil and the two slaves. Thorolf lay trussed at their feet.

I clutched the bars and screamed for mercy.

The Deacon turned me a bland face. "We'll have your tongue out too, boy, so there'll be no more of that. For heaven's sake, don't be such a baby." He turned back to important matters.

There was a square well where they stood, with water in it up to a couple feet from the brim.

Nearby was a sort of cauldron, of bronze, standing on four straight legs, each about four feet long. A chain reached up from it to a pulley on the ceiling, and down to a wheel by the wall.

"We'll want his hands free," the Deacon said, so the slaves cut Thorolf's wrist-bonds. They grabbed a wrist each, but they needn't have bothered. He only stared at the girl.

"I have a special death for you, Thorolf," said the Deacon. "You've hurt me deeply. I'm not a hard master. If you had wanted to cut up prostitutes, or seduce little girls, I'd have helped and encouraged you, hey? Only this one perversion I'll not endure — Virtue.

"If you're so taken with Virtue, I'll let you die of Virtue." He motioned with one hand, and the slaves lowered Thorolf into the well. The water rose above his chin.

"They tell me Courage is a virtue," the Deacon went on. "The charm of this death is that the greater your Courage, the nastier your end."

He motioned again, and one of the slaves went to the wheel. He gave it a couple turns, and the cauldron lifted. Held by the other slave, it swung to hang over Thorolf's head.

The first slave turned the wheel again, and the cauldron lowered. The second guided the four legs to fit inside the well's corners. Thorolf had to raise his hands to keep the bottom off his head. The chain went slack.

"I could leave you like this," the Deacon said, "and fatigue would force you under at last. But I haven't that much patience."

He snapped his fingers. The slave by the well reached up and pulled a cord. Water came trickling from a spout, splashing into the cauldron.

"*'The waters that were above the firmament were divided from the waters below.'* And when they come together, your head goes under, Varangian.

"Now a coward would despair, and drop his hands, and drown. But you're a *virtuous* man, a *brave* man. You'll cling to hope, and fight until your lungs burst and your sinews snap. And I'll watch.

"Of course you'll want to make a show of your endurance at first. So I'll go away for an hour or so and skip that part. Come, Basil."

And that's how they left us. Thorolf in his well, the girl in her corner, and me by the bars, thinking how unfair it all was. I watched Thorolf — I couldn't bear to look at the girl. He did that.

At last she murmured something. I couldn't believe what I heard, so I asked her to say it again.

"I said, 'I don't have any makeup.'"

"That's all you can think of at a time like this?"

"I've never been out of the house without makeup before. It's not done!"

"Dear God," I said. "It's not enough that she's a fainter — she's brainless as well."

"I'm not a fainter. And you should talk!"

"They're going to cut off my usefulness, Missy — I have an excuse."

"And I didn't? Papa's gone away, and I woke from my nap to find the servants all gone, and that — *thing* lurking by the street door. Then I heard fighting, and the wickedest man in Constantinople walked in on me, and —"

"The wickedest man in Constantinople?" I laughed. "You've seen the Deacon and you can say that?"

"I hadn't seen the Deacon then. All I knew was that Mama had always told me that a man named Thorolf was the wickedest man in the City, and that Papa had saved her from him."

I had often wondered about Thorolf's past. But now I let it lie. I didn't care enough to ask.

So I watched him. His arms jerked. His blue eyes glowed. The water ran. I wanted to take a leak.

Thorolf, of all people, broke the silence.

"Your mother?" he rumbled.

He wasn't talking to me.

"She's — she's where you can't get your filthy hands on her!" said the girl. "She's dead."

Thorolf groaned. The cauldron sank a little.

"What was her mother to you?" I had to ask. Of course he didn't answer.

I turned to the girl. "Who was your mother?"

"Her name was Martina. Before she married Papa, she was an actress, like the Empress Theodora."

"You mean she was a prostitute, like the Empress Theodora," I said. The words hurt her, and I was glad.

"I see it all," I said. "Your mother was Thorolf's girl. But she got a better offer and married a nobleman. So Thorolf, one-eyed as always, left the Guard and went to work for the Deacon. Your mother found out. Maybe he told her himself — he might have had a voice in those days. And she thanked all the saints for sparing her."

"Well she was right, wasn't she?"

"No, she wasn't right. Why do you think Thorolf came to your house tonight?"

"To — kill me. He's a killer, isn't he?"

"Pah. He wouldn't let them pull him out of that well if it meant messing your hair.

"He went because he got your mother's ring from a messenger, and he thought she was in danger. He's still in love with her."

Thorolf growled. The girl said, "Don't be silly."

"Your mother lied to you — or to herself. *'The wickedest man in Constantinople.'* How do you think he got to be what he is? Pain did it, like a worm in the gut."

Thorolf erupted again. "An angel!" he groaned.

"Sure she was angel," I said. "Angels have wings. And talons."

If I'd been looking for thankless pastimes, I couldn't have chosen better than standing up for Thorolf. Silence fell. The girl looked at Thorolf. He stood in his hole, his arms shaking, and stared at her. The water gurgled.

"I don't suppose she's really your daughter?" I asked.

"NO!" they chorused.

"It was just a thought."

"Too bad the Deacon's getting his way in all this," I said a few minutes later. "I know what's ahead for us — what does he plan for you, Missy?"

"He said he'd sell me to the Turk."

I sighed. "You may not be the wickedest man in Constantinople, my lord, but I always thought you the cleverest. If you're not too busy feeling sorry for yourself, you might try to work up a way out."

He roared like a bull and leaped, surging water and heaving the cauldron upward. But the legs wouldn't go clear. The cauldron came back down, hitting his skull a sharp crack. I feared he'd be knocked cold, but he lifted the thing again and stood, shaking blood from his eyes.

I didn't let up. "All right," I said, "that won't work. The legs are too long. Can't you shorten them? They're bronze, but not too thick, and bronze can be bent. You're strong."

He showed his teeth.

"The girl," I said. "Think of Turkish harems."

Growling, he bent to let the cauldron rest on his shoulders. He reached under the surface for two of the legs.

His face turned white.

Nothing moved.

He kept at it. He shifted and grimaced.

Nothing.

"All right, let's think of something else," I said.

He only grunted. He breathed deeply, then let the cauldron down all the way. I couldn't see what he was doing below, but the water in the cauldron rippled like the Marmara.

He stayed down a long time.

I thought the cauldron must be stuck in place, and that he'd never come up.

He rose in a geyser of gray water. One leg was bent a little.

Three more times he went down. When he came up the last time, both legs were curled like crescent moons.

Gasping and bubbling, he turned around. With a roar he lifted the cauldron and let it tip towards the bent legs. Gallons of water spilled, filling the well so that he had to crane his neck to keep his mouth above it.

But he got the straight legs hooked over the rim.

He let the cauldron down, and it sat tilted, water trickling out.

He dragged himself up between the legs and lay on his back in the overflow, gasping. He'd earned a rest, but I didn't let him have it.

"That's the first part," I said. "But you still have to get us out. If the Deacon and Basil come back now, you've gained nothing."

He staggered up. He hopped and splashed to a sort of workbench along the wall. There were axes on it, with the other sharp-edged tools. He picked up two and weighed them in his hands. He put one down. With the other, he cut his leg-bonds.

He turned toward the door, axe in hand.

"Wait!" I cried. "Let us come! We can help!"

He snorted.

"Wait!" I squealed. "I'm a dangerous person! Are you going to leave me with this girl? Alone? Knowing I might never get another chance? Hey?"

It worked. He found an iron bar and had the lock sprung in a moment. He boxed my ears when I came out.

We sped up a dark passageway. We found the audience room empty, and passed under the colonnade into the court. The Deacon stood by the fountain, his crystal ball in one hand. Basil was with him. They both smiled.

"Well done, Thorolf," said the Deacon. "I'd hoped you'd find a way. Death is so much more desperate when you've earned a reprieve. We watched in the Crystal, of course. You'll be happy to know that Basil bet against you, and now owes me two miliaresia."

Thorolf growled and moved forward.

The Deacon waved his hands and spoke some words I can't recall.

Lightning cracked. Thunder roared. Everything went blue.

I scrambled behind a pillar in the colonnade, the girl beside me. I put an arm around her and she didn't even mind.

When the blue smoke cleared, we could see the fountain, toppled, its statue smashed on the pavement. A hole gaped where it had stood. Slowly, something climbed from the hole.

The top of its skull was bare bone. From the eyebrows down it had a hairy apish head, with little red eyes and pointy ears. The shoulders, arms and belly were also ape-like, except for the long talons on the hands.

From the loins down, the powerful legs were armored in yellow scales. Three-clawed feet. A long, lizard tail. Seven feet tall, I'd guess.

"Kill him!" the Deacon shrieked. He was across the court now, his ball under one arm.

The thing roared and made a tremendous leap.

It came down on Basil, crushing him, tearing him, and ripping his head off in a second.

"Stupid!" the Deacon screamed. "Demons are so *stupid!* Not *him*, I meant *him!*" His pudgy finger pointed at Thorolf.

The demon looked puzzled, and while it concentrated Thorolf rushed in and slashed it with his axe.

What came out wasn't blood. It spouted yellow, and when it hit Thorolf's axe-arm the black silk melted and smoked. Thorolf screamed and dropped the weapon. He clutched his arm and backed off.

"Every man of Virtue must fight devils," the Deacon piped. "This one's just for practice — a low-grade, corporeal imp. No problem for a man like you."

The creature leaped again, and Thorolf rolled to avoid it, ignoring his burn. He came up by the fountain and crouched there, darting looks around the court.

"Looking for silver?" the Deacon asked. "I never keep it in my house. Scares the help." Smiling, he backed through the colonnade to the shelter of a doorway.

Thorolf bent to the shattered statue and caught the torso. He swung it over his head, the veins crawling like earthworms on his forehead. He heaved the marble at the demon.

It bounced off and smashed on the floor.

"Good, good!" cried the Deacon. "You're thorough, Thorolf, like the satyr in the convent. Hey?"

Thorolf moved like a cornered animal. He dashed here and there, shifting, keeping distance. The demon kept pace.

Thorolf broke for the colonnade. He caught the chain of one of the oil lamps there and tore it loose.

He faced the demon, swinging the lamp in a halo around his head. He let it fly.

The demon flared like a tarred rope.

Then the flames died.

And it still stood, grinning an idiot grin. The burned hair stank, but there was no other hurt.

"A lesson for you, Death-Shade," said the Deacon. "The Hell-born do not burn."

Thorolf fell against a pillar for a second. He bolted as the demon crouched and leaped. When it came down, the pillar smashed.

Thorolf fled, under the colonnade where his pursuer couldn't leap, around and around the court. The demon followed, patient, staying on the inside. The girl and I had to squirm to clear the way whenever Thorolf passed us. He was winded, panting, and his right arm hung at his side. The demon kept pace lightly.

I felt the girl's sobs.

Thorolf stopped at last. Grim-faced, he stepped out into the court.

"No!" the girl said.

He shouted in what must have been his native tongue. God knows what he said, but it was a speech of some kind, with words and everything. So I knew he was going to die.

The demon closed on him.

The girl slipped from my hands and ran to seize the axe, forgotten on the pavement. She threw it to Thorolf. He caught it left-handed.

He smiled.

The demon didn't leap this time. It came in slowly, lurching, tail dragging six feet behind.

Thorolf raised the axe.

He swung it in a bright arc, and lopped the ugly head off.

He followed the axe's circle, spinning out of the way as a gout of yellow ichor spouted. The body stood solid as a statue, braced at three points.

Thorolf landed on his hands, turned a child's cartwheel, and came up on his feet. He laughed as the severed head made three bounces and rolled to a stop facing me, jaws snapping, eyes puzzled.

It pays never to overlook the obvious.

"Hah! Hah!" Thorolf shouted.

The man was becoming a chatterbox.

The Deacon threw his crystal ball at Thorolf.

It shattered on the pavement like the bursting of a thousand stars. I closed my eyes.

When I opened them, the Deacon had the girl by the waist. He held her as a shield, facing Thorolf. He had a dagger at her neck. "It's poisoned," he squeaked. "One scratch and she dies."

He had his back to me. I didn't count.

I picked the demon's head up. Its jaws still snapped. I held it by the ears and swung three times around, then heaved it at the Deacon.

It struck teeth-first below the shoulder blades and stuck. The Deacon

screamed and let the girl go. She ran to Thorolf.

The Deacon spun in place, flailing his arms back. I had hit him just in that awful spot where you can't scratch when it itches. His buttocks and legs ran with blood. Snapping and cracking, the demon's teeth chewed through muscle and bone. The spine snapped at last, and the Deacon fell on his beautiful pavement.

He glared up at Thorolf and the girl. Blood gouted from his mouth. "It isn't fair," he squeaked. "Nothing has . . ." He motioned with his hands and murmured.

The air cracked; blue smoke filled the court again.

Before it had cleared, Thorolf was rushing the girl past me to the entry-way. Looking back, I could make out a new demon rising from the pit.

I ran.

When I looked again there was another demon.

Thorolf was pressing a lever, and the door swung up. Too slowly for me.

"No! I won't leave you!" the girl wailed.

Now there were three demons.

Thorolf roared, "*My death!*" He might have been saying, "*My sweetheart!*"

I hustled the girl out. Five or six screaming slaves followed us and disappeared. Thorolf pushed the handle to shut the door.

We saw him step back in the smoke to face four demons. He began to sing in his own tongue. A barbarous song, but not one bit sad.

The door shut and the song was gone. I all but carried the weeping girl up and out through the warehouse. The fat mute stared at us, but didn't stop us.

If any of the demons ever found its way out into the City, I never heard of it.

But I never saw Thorolf again either.

Dawn was breaking on the waterfront, and the wind cut like a jagged knife. I put my arms around the girl, just to warm her.

She screamed and slapped me.

I never even learned her name.



Kleinism

An organization is a method for delegating worries.

— Professor Arthur L. Klein (1898-1983)

Kleinism 79



Exhibit

George Barr



"Attack,"
1976



"Flight of Fancy"

For George Barr, the most attractive literary genre has been that of science fiction. And the first science-fiction magazine that he ever read was *Amazing® Stories*. Therefore, in his opinion, illustrators who never graced its pages had not really hit the heart of the SF market. Needless to say, when, a number of years ago, editor Elinor Mavor asked him to do an illustration for *Amazing Stories*, George felt as if he was fulfilling a long-held dream. Since that time, he has been a regular illustrator for the magazine.

George's favorite medium for black-and-white reproduction is ink and

Prismacolor black pencil on the textured surface of coquille board. Though the technique is old-fashioned, he freely admits that his preference stems from the countless examples that he saw in the golden-age pulps he read and enjoyed as a teenager.

As for color artwork, transparent watercolors over a detailed ball-point pen rendering is his preferred technique. Though unconventional, this approach works well for George, as can be seen in this issue's cover.



"Millenial"

George Barr

After 25 years as an SF illustrator, George has not tired of the field. The attraction for him was and still is the freedom of the genre. Every assignment is an exercise in imagination and offers a freedom of expression that illustrators of westerns and romance novels never know.



"The People of the Feud"

"The Enchanted Thingamajig,"
1976

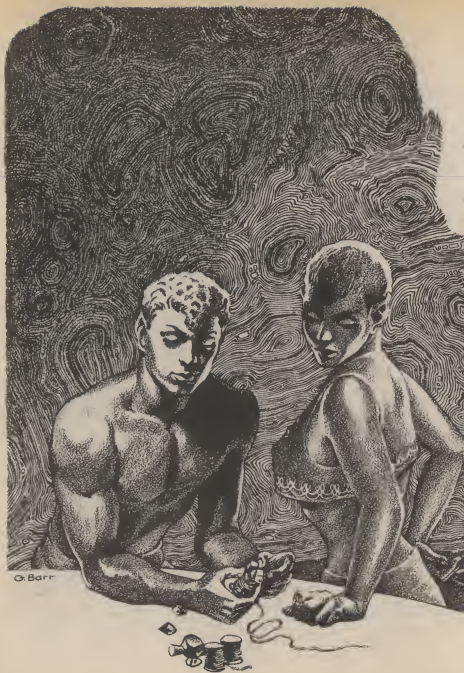


"Leavetaking,"

1984

A collection of George's work was published in hard-cover format in 1976 by Donald M. Grant. His cover for the November 1983 issue of *Amazing Stories* appeared in *The Art of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Fantasy Game* collection, published by TSR, Inc., in 1985.

Those who are interested in finding out more about George's artwork can contact him at his studio. Write to: George Barr, 904 Toyon Avenue, San Jose CA 95127.



RAINBOW'S END

by Jayge Carr

art: George Barr



The wombshippers — their own poignant fate and the disturbing gifts they bring to the societies of scattered worlds — have been the subject of two stories in these pages: "Catacombs" and "Immigrant." Here, on yet another planet, two cultures meet and perturb one another.

It was raining gold, with swaths of emerald and turquoise. Andrey put out a curious hand, but it felt like ordinary water.

"Don't drink it," advised the shiftboss, without raising her gaze from the darkglow list attached to her wrist by a thin chain.

"Drink —" He realized he was instinctively raising his wet hand, palm cupped to hold the mysterious fluid, to his mouth, which was opening like a baby's when a mechonurse gonged feeding time. This may have been his first emergence from the space-traveling wombship that bred him, his first exodus onto a planetary surface; but he knew his lessons well: rain was water falling from the sky. If the water was frozen, it was called snow or sleet; and if it was some dangerous chemical instead of water or water mixed with a dangerous chemical, they would surely have been issued protective clothing.

This — rain? — had fallen from the sky; and it felt warm and wet, the color in his hand so muted that he couldn't be sure it wasn't imagination. Yet all around him was a shower of gold, with light sparkling through it from where the thick clouds had broken, letting light from the cheerful orange sun glimmer through.

"Bugs in it give it the colors," the shiftboss explained. "Probably harmless, guide says so anyway; but you don't want to take the risk of finding out the hard way that they're not." Obediently he shut his mouth, let the water cascade off his palm. The shiftboss was a tall, bald, leather-lithe and leather-tough fem whose bark was non-existent — she invariably spoke in a soft, matter-of-fact voice — but whose bite was memorable. She continued, without even a breath to mark the change of subject, "Where are the sheep-ox embryos?"

"Over here, they should be." He limped toward a large plascrate, striped in acid green and phosphorescent orange, one of the many beacons glowing in the dimness. The synthi hinges of his exoskeleton were supposed to be proof against water, acid or what-have-you; nonetheless, they tended to seize up in humid atmospheres. He glared at the rain, and smacked his left leg impatiently. The exoskeleton only groaned and moved even more laboriously so that the sharp edges dug in when he impatiently tried to use his own wasted muscles to force it faster.

"Says so, anyway," he reported, flicking a careless finger across the speak/read plate, so it confirmed what he'd already learned from its symbols by squeaking: "Embryos: sheep-ox, camelorse, multifowl, one thousand each."

"Check it out." She was frowning down at her list. "Make sure they're

actually there." They both knew the cargo had been checked ten times at least before being shuttled from the orbiting ship; nonetheless . . .

"How many?" He ran a codekey down the main seam, grinning in relief as it opened obediently.

"Ten gross."

"Plate says a kilo. Each. Sheep-ox, camelorse, multifowl."

The shift boss said something that would have gotten Andrey's mouth well scrubbed out, had he used it before matriculating out of the nursery into wombship citizenship. He only grinned again, and began pulling out the racks, each with its neat array of stasised contents. Sheep-ox: fat pyramids, teal blue, stamped **S**. Camelorses: fuchsia cylinders, stamped **C**. Multifowl: smaller, spherical, lemon yellow, stamped **M**. He rearranged by type, calculated . . . and looked up; the shiftboss was deep in another crate.

"Nine hundred forty-two, in this one," he reported.

The shiftboss said — softly — a word that should have vaporized the rain around her . . . and sighed.

"This one's marked sheep-ox, but there's chips in it instead. Well, they wanted chips, too." A snort. "Probably incompatible with their systems, but that's their worry, not mine."

"Maybe the rest of the sheep-ox are in a crate marked chips," Andrey suggested.

"Maybe sheep-ox have wings and fly." The frown between her hairless brows belied the mild tone. "Do you see a chips crate?"

He looked and shook his head. Systems materials were heliotrope and orange. There weren't any more. "Maybe they'd take a mixture of camelorses to fill out the sheep-ox quota," Andrey was thinking aloud. "There's more than enough here to make up the ten gross of animals."

"No, diet prejudice," the boss informed, still frowning. "At least, they still had them according to the last guide update, and those things aren't likely to change. Won't eat the camelorses, consider them unclean or some such. So they probably won't accept the embryos."

"They can use them for transport, though." Andrey didn't care one way or the other, but talking was easier than scrambling his crippled body through more bales and crates. "And camelorses are very useful on —" He stopped abruptly. He had been going to say, on dry planets, when this one — the rain had shifted color to a sparkling jade green, and it was still coming down, so that his hair, fiery scarlet when dry, was matted around his face and neck in dank, dark, dripping ribbons.

"What the —" The shiftboss had looked up, was staring at something over Andrey's shoulder. Andrey turned himself around, awkwardly, even more awkward than usual in the heavy — to him — planetary gravity, and stared. And continued to stare, eyes widening. It was the first time he'd actually seen any of the mudsiders.

"Watch out for those crates!" The shiftboss was striding away, shouting to

penetrate the drumthump of the rain. The angry mob charging toward them, some slipping and skidding as they lost footing on the rainslick surface, paid no attention. The shiftboss shouted again, then pulled out a flarer and let it off over their heads. The blast of energy crackled and sizzled through the rain, as a shaft of blue light zoomed over the on-plunging figures.

Some of the mudsiders skidded to a stop; but there was one frantic runner, well in front of the rest, who continued his headlong pace directly toward the crates. The shiftboss flicked a control, lowered her aim, and let fly.

The runner-in-front was enveloped in a surge of amber-blue light, the rain about him hissing momentarily; and then he convulsed and dropped like a wad of soggy tissue.

The others moved forward cautiously, to stop and stare at the unmoving body. One or two spat, then glanced up at the two off-worlders with eyes whose expressions were veiled by the curtains of rain. Then, without a word, they all turned and marched away, splitting in various directions as they came to the edge of the field like a current divided by upthrusting rocks.

"That's that," said the shiftboss, and shrugged down at the sprawled body.

"You killed him!" It had happened so fast, Andrey was still assimilating it all.

"Killed him," the shiftboss snorted. "Not I. I just frizzed his eyelashes a bit. We've probs enough with the mudsider colonists as it is, without adding indiscriminate manslaughter to our woes. I gave them a good show, and him enough para to knock him out for a few minutes. We'll drag him out of our way, and when he's recovered no harm done, except to his pride. And them no reason to gripe, though why they were chasing him, what they were so angry about —" Another shrug. "Angry now, but when they cool down —" She shook her head. "If they want him dead, they can do it themselves, and out of my sight. Come on —" She leaned down and grasped a limp arm.

"You don't know what was going on?" He leaned down to pick up the other arm and gritted his teeth, ready to do his best to help move the mudsider.

"A two-hundred-stanyear-old guide, I couldn't even guess. Heave, boy." They dragged, she doing most of the work, the dangling body over the rainslick cobbles. "Local custom," she was panting slightly, "who can keep up with it. Or cares to. All over now." She dropped her arm, satisfied, and turned back to the jumble of crates. "Come on, let's check, maybe the rest of the sheep-ox are in another mismarked crate."

Andrey glanced once back at the quiet figure, and shook his head. Odd. When the man had been running, Andrey had gotten the impression that he had been brick red in color. But it was as if that color had faded as he had lain: so now only his clothes, simple tunic and shorts, were dark dull red,

the rest of him a normal human pink. It must have been the clothes that had given him that impression, maybe it had been the jewel-colored clothes of all the planet-dwellers that had made him think, in the dimness and confusion of the brief incident, that the mudsiders themselves were brilliantly colored, emerald and sapphire, crimson and amber. It was just the clothes. But still . . . he could have sworn . . . he had seen this man best . . . he had looked monotone, brick red from crown to soles . . . and now . . .

"Come along, youngster," the shiftboss's voice was brisk. "Don't worry about him, rain's plenty warm. Did him a favor actually. Wheel alone knows what those jojos had in mind for him. Doubt he was running for the exercise."

She kept him busy, digging out, repacking, rearranging. The next time he had a stansec to spare for a glance at that end of the field, the man was gone.

Orbiting, unloading, reloading, sending the shuttles down, and docking the shuttles coming up, the long voyages from star to star — this was the life Andrey had known. Only his recent graduation into citizenship/adulthood had freed him from the ship itself. He knew, because he'd been told, that every world was different, and different from the life aboard the wombship, and its mudsiders — human colonists, though many of them had been on their worlds long enough to think of themselves as natives, to call themselves natives — likewise different.

He knew, intellectually, in his mind, but not emotionally, in his guts.

He was about to learn the hard way.

There were as usual a dozen or so wombshippers working scattered over the large landing field; but the rain cut them off from each other so effectively it was as if each was, mostly, alone.

Andrey pulled the waterproof around the small crate he'd been packing and heaved it up on top of the stack, and straightened, unconsciously working his shoulders to —

A hand clamped over his mouth and nose, and a second hand smashed down fiercely at the base of his skull. He wasn't knocked completely unconscious, but the pain and force of the blow stunned him momentarily. Long enough for his captor to whip a cloth around his mouth, and use a second cloth to bind his hands together behind his back. He had sagged in that first second or two, but as he regained his senses, he began to struggle. Too late. His captor had the advantages of surprise and strength, and wasn't a cripple handicapped by heavy gravity. The whole attack took less than a stanmin, and then he was being tossed over something hard and carried off, as though he weighed less than one of the minipacks he had been handling.

His body's mouth was gagged, but his mind's psychic mouth was unhampered.

OMALIE!! Instinctively he reached out for the mind he knew best, his sister's.

(Irritation.) ****WHAT IS IT, DREY?**** Their minds, despite the distance separating them, Linked; and he could feel the slick keyboard under her twelve fingertips. ****I WAS PROGRAMMING AND YOU MADE ME LOSE THE THREAD COMPLETELY****

****PROGRAMMING, WASTE! SOUND THE ALERT, LEE, I'M BEING KIDNAPPED!!!****

****WHA —**** He felt her sit up, swing the keyboard away from her lounge. There was the familiar shipscent in her nostrils, sweat and ponics and the chemical deodorizers that never quite worked. ****DREY, IF THIS IS SOME SORT OF JOKE**** But if he could share her physical sensations, she could share his. Material cutting cruelly into his lips, arms dragged protestingly behind his back, hard shoulder gouging his diaphragm, legs bouncing against a firm back, braces cutting as they were rammed against tender, wasted flesh. (Utter horror.) ****DREY!!!****

****ALERT, LEE — NOW — IF HE GETS ME AWAY FROM THE FIELD —****

She didn't have to be told twice, he felt her hand slapping the panel, smashing against the alert circuit, voice and fingers spreading the alarm. It would take time, though, because his sister Omalie — Lee to her nearest and dearest — was aboard the ship; she would have to pass the word; and then they would have to use the long-com, if it was working, shuttle if it wasn't, to alert the ground crew. Unless there was a long-psi-speaker with a connection open, that would be quickest. Whichever, he would have to relay through Lee and then at least one or two other people — awkward; but he was far closer mentally to Lee than any of the ground crew, though only his rage and terror had enabled him to bridge the distance between them — and all the time he was being carried away, upside-down, bouncing blindly against a hard back —

Harder, as his captor broke into a run. Had he some snippet of psi, had he realized that the alert was already out?

****CAPTAIN'S SENDING DOWN A SECURITY TEAM**** Omalie's mental voice informed, calm on the surface, surging panic beneath. ****HE SAYS, SORRY, HE SAYS, THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SAFE WORLD, HE SAYS, SECURITY TEAM DOWN, BUT ESCORTING NEGOTIATING TEAM IN INNER CITY, QUICKER TO SEND FRESH SQUAD DOWN THAN GET THEM BACK WITH PRIMITIVE TRANSPORT, HE SAYS —****

"Stop," a harsh voice snarled. "Whatever you're doing, I can hear you, stop it, shut up, stop it!"

****LEE!!!**** The wombshippers were psychics, espers; the mudsiders (colonists, "natives") were not. The mudsider should *not* have been able to "over-hear" their psychic communication.

****I KNOW. HEARD THROUGH YOUR EARS****

The hand that was pinning him to a hard shoulder dug in suddenly so that he jerked with pain. "I said, stop that," a fierce hiss.

****LEAVE MY BROTHER ALONE!!!****

"What —" Andrey felt himself spinning dizzily as his captor whirled. "Who's that!" Voice high and hysterical now. "Who's that! Come out. Come out right now or I'll —" The rest was choked off.

Total confusion from Omalie.

"I can't kill him," voice still high and tense. "I need him. But I can make him wish I had!!" Again the fingers dug in, knowing in some diabolical way just where to press on the twisted spine to cause the maximum pain. Andrey convulsed, his legs kicking feebly, but the fingers only dug in deeper, each one on a sensitive spot.

****STOP THAT****

"Come out, come out now, or I'll do worse!"

****SHE CAN'T**** Andrey screamed mentally. ****SHE'S IN ORBIT****

"Two of them," his captor moaned aloud. "Oh, Purity —" Then, harshly, "Come out, both of you!" The body under Andrey twisted around and around, as though the unknown were searching through the dancing rain.

****YOU'RE HEARING BOTH OF US?****

"Of course I hear two of you, and why if I can hear so clearly, I can't see . . . come out, I say, or —"

****WE CAN'T COME OUT, EITHER OF US, BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT ME TIED UP OVER YOUR SHOULDER; AND LEE'S UP IN ORBIT. YOU PEOPLE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE ABLE TO MINDSPEAK, ANYWAY****

"Mind —" As if it were Lee, with that deep, intimate Link that is usually the result only of years of closeness, Andrey could feel the jaw dropping limply, as his mudsider captor literally shook in shock, then continued the futile, frantic searching. "I don't believe you. But there's nobody here!" A high hysterical giggle. "Nobody but me and — and — and — and . . ."

****ME. AND IF YOU DON'T STOP HURTING ME, I'LL MINDSCREAM UNTIL YOUR BRAIN'S WIPED CLEAN**** Andrey's mental "voice" glowed with infinite smug satisfaction. ****YOU'RE SENSITIVE ENOUGH TO HEAR ME WITHOUT AN EMOTIONAL BOND BETWEEN US, I'LL BE ABLE TO SMASH YOU BACK TO GOOGLING INFANT LEVEL. I'M A STRONG MINDSPEAK****

The head moved, and through the now three-way Link Andrey could see himself from above, as the unknown glared down. "I don't believe you."

****SHIELD UP, LEE. I DON'T WANT YOU HURT****

****DREY, THE CAPTAIN WON'T LIKE —****

****CHUTE THE CAPTAIN! ONCE I'M AWAY FROM THE FIELD — YOU KNOW YOU CAN'T LOCATE WITH 'SPEAK, LEE. YOU WANT TO MINDSHARE WHATEVER HORROR THIS MUDDSIDER INTENDS — NOW SHIELD UP, LEE!****

"No, don't." Andrey felt it as his captor licked dry lips, and he wished the gag wasn't preventing him from doing the same. "I won't hurt you — I mean, well, I — may have to, but — I can't — I must —" Suddenly the hand left his back and began fumbling with his gag. "There, see," the voice said, quavering with nervousness. "You can lick your lips, too, now. I didn't

really mean —”

Andrey spat. “Put me down!”

“No.” The unknown mudsider was trotting forward again. Andrey wondered if he could prevent himself from emptying his stomach all over his captor. He wondered if he wanted to prevent it.

“Won’t make any difference,” the mudsider said calmly.

“Put me down, or I’ll wipe your mind clean,” Andrey threatened.

“Too late.” The mudsider swerved slightly, but kept up the ground-covering trot. “Heard what you said to the other one, mindspeak, or whatever this starpower you have is, can’t be used to locate someone. Even if you destroy me now, Zan’ll find you before your friends can.”

“Then I’ll wipe Zan, too.” He turned his head slightly, and choked as the rain ran down into his nostrils.

With neat efficiency, his head was jerked upright and he coughed and choked and snorted. Then his head was put back, turned toward the thinly clothed side to protect him from the water still streaming down. His captor hadn’t missed a step during the whole. “I’ll wipe Zan, too,” he repeated.

“No, you won’t.” Utterly sure. “Zan’d have to be what you call it, a sensitive, too. Like me. And sensitives must be rare: you were shocked I could hear you. So you can do what you please to me, it won’t save you. And Zan won’t like it. Make him madder’n he is now, and —” A shrug, digging into his outraged stomach, was the last straw, and he began to heave. The mudsider didn’t notice or maybe care, and the rain continued to pour down. “You’re in bad trouble, pariah,” the mudsider actually sounded sincere, not that it was news to Andrey. “Don’t make it worse.”

Andrey spat to clear his mouth, but the vile acid taste still burned. “Don’t be so whirling *logical*,” he snarled.

“Somebody has to be.”

Andrey glared defiance at his captors. He tried to stiffen himself, put a shield around himself inside and out. He had to keep his despair from being read, either by face/body language by the new danger, the man addressed as Zan who eyed him contemptuously, or the mindspeak already demonstrated by his original captor, who was plaiting on some odd leggings, with his back to the other two, bent over and seemingly absorbed in the task.

The outside of the structure Andrey had been brought to, to judge from the brief glimpses through the rain, resembled the woven hats the mudsiders of New Honshu wore: fat cones topped with jaunty points. It looked — he filed a mental description for later, the wombshipper historians and farseers used every scrap of data they could get — as though someone had planted a ring of slender stakes, then tied their tops together, and woven straw or some similar material round and round. He hoped it was waterproof.

The inside was far more attractive than the exterior suggested. Walls cov-

ered with a never-repeating pattern of knotted yarn, here and there embellished with a carved bead, a bit of embroidery, a shape of shining metal. Like an abstract painted by a master, it was an unending feast for the eyes, a new subtlety revealed each moment.

The furniture was sparse: a table, some chairs, a low bench that could have doubled for sleeping; but each had that simplicity, that delicacy of form and proportion which proclaimed it the result of some loving craftsman's hands.

Zan was a sublime example of the Craftsman's art, too. He leaned against the table, eyes fixed on some objects he was tossing in one graceful hand; and altogether, from the crown of sculptured curls to the slender sandalled feet, one of the most utterly gorgeous specimens of lithe young manhood that Andrey had ever seen. He was reminded of a holo of a sculpture he'd once seen, Apollo at Zenith, inhumanly fair — and with nothing a fallible human could recognize as a soul.

Andrey, having been untied and dumped unceremoniously on the low bench, continued to rub his legs, flicking glances at his captors at intervals. For obvious reasons, his circulation was bad, and for the moment he was more concerned about the tearing pins and needles — daggers and spears was more like it, he grumbled to himself — than whatever unwholesome fate these two had planned for him. He'd find out soon enough, anyway.

He'd recognized Zan, of course, as soon as the man had moved into the circle of coldlight gleaming from the table, although he hadn't seen the face that well earlier, and the lustrous pale eyes were open now instead of closed: he was the native who had been zapped by the shiftboss a couple of watches before. Well — Andrey pursed his lips and continued to rub as vigorously as his crippled body would allow — *he* wasn't going to ask what the native had in mind; he'd find out sooner than he wanted, that was for sure.

Zan's patience finally broke. He slid the objects he'd been playing with into a hip pocket and snapped his fingers right under Andrey's nose. "Well, off-worlder," his voice was liquid melody, harshened by a vicious snarl, "ain't you gonna ask what you're doing here?"

"He thinks you want revenge," the other mudsider, Andrey's original captor, spoke for the first time since they'd met Zan, in a voice shorn of tension and terror, low and curiously timbreless, like a computer-generated Every-voice.

"What —" Zan jerked, turned, then stared back again at Andrey. "Revenge," he repeated, then, the snarl thicker, "yeah, I want revenge, but I want fixing more. You people did this to me — now undo it!" Two stiff thumbs gestured toward the svelte bare chest.

Andrey simply stared, continuing to rub his legs. Outside the rain played everchanging symphonies on the walls.

"I said —" Menace incarnate took a step closer. "— I want fixed. You people did it. Now undo it."

Andrey looked up, honestly perplexed. Zan was dressed only in a pair of shorts and the sandals with the laces wrapped around to the knees. If there was anything wrong with him, Andrey should be so lucky. If even the thick eyelashes were singed on the ends, there was still enough left to fringe the eyes. Otherwise — he started at the thick curls and worked down. One male human, normish, pointed satyr ears, only five fingers on each hand, slightly above average height, athlete's lithe muscular body, but not the thick overdevelopment of a weight-lifter or a heavy-planet adapt, skin the washed-out pinky-pale you'd expect on a planet where it rained so much, joints all in the right places, seemed to move easily enough —

The other native tied a final knot and turned. "He hasn't the faintest idea what you're talking about, Zan."

"What —" A suspicious glare. Then, "Whassamatter, ain't he got eyes! How you know, anyway? You on his side, or somethin'? I paid you —"

"Not yet, spit!" The native took a step into the light, hand outstretched, and Andrey suppressed a gasp. Under a carelessly laced bolero top — she took a deep breath, making her gender even more obvious. Andrey licked suddenly dry lips. She was tall but slender, tight-muscled yet graceful as a ballerina. Like Zan, she was normish human, even to the pointed satyr ears, except for her skin color — natural or paint, he wondered — a deep blue-purple, a plum color. Even the whites of her eyes were plum, her clothes, the hair cropped shorter than Zan's. Monotone everywhere to within an Angstrom.

"Don't you call me spit, spit," Zan said furiously. "Watch your tongue around your —"

"Better?" Very soft. "But you're not even a spit, but as there isn't anything lower than a spit, I guess we can —"

"Arggggh!" He leapt for her throat, but she just laughed softly and brushed his hands aside.

"You're not a whip any more. Pay me; and I'll stand aside, and then forget." He slapped her, the thick smack echoing in the small round room, and Andrey felt the stinging pain against his own cheek.

She only smiled. "So this is what your word's worth, eh . . . spit?"

"Shut up and stay outta the way. No, better; get out, don't come back for a day — two." A slow smile, even sweeter than hers had been — and as nasty underneath. "What good my chop, my no-longer-a-whip chop, my no-whip-no-authority chop, do you — now?"

"Plenty, long's nobody knew." She shrugged and turned toward the only opening in the small room, presumably used as a door.

"Report me —" It was pure threat, he looked even more Menace incarnate than when he was threatening Andrey. "— and the proctors'll know we both been crossing. You've as much to lose as me."

It didn't matter. Andrey, watching the two of them, reading their body language, knew it didn't matter. She had wanted something from Zan — the

chop? something authorized by the chop? — wanted it enough to risk her world's worst penalties by abducting the off-worlder for him.

Hey — *wait!* He *did* know what chops were. From a scrap overheard while working. These mudsiders were illiterate. They used pictures instead of writing, and complex patterns — yes, they were called chops! — in place of signatures. She wanted something she could obtain only via Zan's chop, his "signature." Except now —

Now — Zan didn't intend to pay her. Maybe he'd never meant to pay her at all. So she was going to shaft him, report him, tell all, at whatever cost to herself. She didn't forget a betrayal, this plum-colored woman whose name he still didn't know.

"Spit," the man Zan growled, and slapped her again, so hard that the pain Andrey felt through their strong Linkage made his head spin. "You ain't even worth usin'. Go on. Out."

She didn't even reach up to wipe away the blood Andrey felt trickling down. Zan raised a threatening hand, and her spine stiffened. Then he laughed, and she turned slightly toward the door. "Go on, spit! Out."

****DREY**** Omalie was back, the Link was three-fold again.

****DON'T TELL ME ANYTHING, LEE. NOT WHILE THE MUDSIDER CAN HEAR AND TELL —****

Loud and uncontrolled, a unique pattern already easily recognizable as the mudsider: ****YOU THINK I CARE. I ONLY WANTED THE CHOP, AND THAT [a garbled mesh of local obscenities]****

A hand on Lee's wrist, as the captain up on the orbiting wombship, whose own mindspeak was weak and erratic, used physical touch to lend what strength he had to the Linkage, as well as speaking aloud. "We'll find you, Andrey. Can you help, give us directions?"

****NO. IT WAS RAINING, I WAS CARRIED. I'M AWAY FROM THE FIELD, THAT'S ALL I KNOW**** The whole exchange had taken only seconds, the woman, back to them, was bending to go out the door-hole.

From the mudsider: ****I'LL TELL. I HOPE YOU —**** PAIN, vicious, abrupt, stunning, tore through the Linkage; and Andrey was brutally uncircuited, even from his deepLink to Omalie. The room spun around him, and it took him many stansecs to realize that it hadn't been he who had been hit after all, but the plum-colored woman. She was lying crumpled at Zan's feet, limp and helpless, undoubtedly unconscious.

When Andrey's head stopped spinning, he sat up. "Why'd you do that?" He made one mental try for Lee, got blankness, and gave up, realizing that his ultra-sensitive sister would be burnt-out for stanhours, if not watches, after a brutality like that. He was on his own, totally.

Zan smiled, a predator showing of teeth, made even more terrible by the beauty of his features. "Why not? You're worth something, off-worlder. But she ain't. Spit's spit. I didn't like the way she was lookin' at me." (Andrey was sure he wouldn't have, either.) "No spit got the right —" Zan leaned

down, flipped her over, laid his hand thoughtfully across the long, exposed column of throat. "Oughtta kill her now. Spit's treacherous." His hand tightened, and Andrey felt his own throat close.

"Don't!" he choked out.

Zan didn't even look up, just squeezed. "Spit, off-worlder." He spat loudly, as if illustrating. "Just spit. Only worth spit."

"You *can't* —" The hand tightened and was joined by its mate, both thumbs pressed downward.

"You that desperate for a woman, off-worlder?" The contempt was thick. Zan's only problem in that line, it was obvious, had been to pick and choose. "That you'd use spit?"

"No, I — yes!" If Andrey's desperate need for sexual release was the only reason this mudsider madman would see for not killing a helpless woman, let him have it. "I've got to have her, my — my metabolism will heterodyne if I don't, you can't use me for a hostage for whatever you want from my people if I'm dead —"

"Pyush!" the man snorted. "I've heard you off-worlders were weird, but that is the weirdest —" He rose, dusting his hands on his shorts, giving the unconscious woman a kick in the ribs before turning away. "You may have a point, though." He flicked an assessing eye over the breasts, half revealed under the skimpy bolero. "We may be stuck in here quite a while, until your people come through; and even a spit's better'n nothing, I guess." A glare. "If you ever tell —" He deliberately ground his heel into the dark patch on the trod earth floor where his spit had landed. "You just remember, off-worlder. I'm the boss here. I crack the whip, and you do as I say, and I'll see your — your metabolism (what a word for it!) gets its workout. Now —" He flung himself onto one of the delicate chairs, back to front, and rocked on the back legs, while outraged material groaned protestingly. "How soon can your people do it?"

"Do what?"

"What what what! What we been talking about." He spoke with exaggerated precision, as to an idiot. "Fix me. You know. Go on, pull out one of them magic long-talkers of yours," he gestured to Andrey's belt, sagging with its pouch-loads of equipment, "and ask."

The plan came to Andrey full blown, in all its details. "I can't. I dropped it when she grabbed me." Zan surged out of his chair. "But you can go. Leave me — us tied. Long's you know where I am and they don't —"

Zan stood over him, hands on hips. "Like *this*? You crazy or something, off-worlder. Too big risk as it was, sneak through to the edge of spittown and bring you the rest of the way. Try again. I'd never make it to your people, and we both know it."

"Send her then," he suggested mildly. "She did your work for you once; why not twice?"

A very unpleasant smile. "No. Can't trust spit."

"Have you a choice? She wanted something from you, right. Promise it to her again —" Zan was shaking his head. "All right, give it to her, and she'll do —"

Sputtering laughter. Until, wiping his eyes, "Give her the chop, off-worlder? No. Soon as she was out the door . . . spit's treacherous, never forget that, off-worlder. Spit's treacherous."

More than you? he thought. "You need her to go," he argued persuasively. "If she won't go without this chop, whatever it is, then you need —"

"I don't need nothing from a *spit!*"

At which point the woman stirred and moaned.

****BE QUIET!**** Andrey projected the loudest mental shout he could.

****OO . . . WHA— . . .**** Even groggy and half-conscious, the mudsider's mental pattern was immediately recognizable.

****IT'S ME, THE OFF-WORLDER. I'M TRYING TO GET US BOTH OUT OF THIS ALIVE, FOLLOW MY LEAD, IT'S IMPORTANT!!!****

****WHA— . . . DON' UNNERSTAN****

****HE MEANS TO KILL US BOTH, BUT I'LL TRICK HIM INTO LETTING YOU GO . . . BRING A SECURITY SQUAD BACK WITH YOU****

He could feel her mind coalescing into blade-edge keenness. ****THAT WAY HE'LL JUST KILL YOU****

****DISTRACT HIM — THRASH ABOUT, ACT HALF-CONSCIOUS —****

****I AM HALF —**** But she obeyed.

"Tell her you'll give her the chop," Andrey urged. "There's a way it's safe. Tell her *now*, otherwise she'll —" *Come up fighting* — she didn't need his mental order; but in her dazed state, Zan overcame her easily and had her thrashing body face down, hands linked behind in a painful hold, within seconds.

"See," Zan growled. "Treacherous."

Audrey painfully levered himself upright, and limped over to the two near the door. ****KEEP IT UP**** Aloud, almost a shout, "Woman, listen, you want that chop, don't you?"

"Kill you both —" she hissed, and Zan ground her face into the floor, and muffled the rest of her threats.

"None of us trusts either of the others," Andrey stated the obvious loudly, "but there's a way that we can all get what we want, and each of us be sure that the others can't shaft him. Or her. So stop fighting a minute and listen. If you'll just listen we can all get what we want out of this."

"Oh, yeah?" Zan was rather enjoying himself. "What do you want, off-worlder?"

"I want to go back to my ship," Andrey said firmly. "I can't live long away from it, just as you couldn't survive in raw space without a wombship or a shuttle to protect you. And I don't want to die. I want to go home."

Zan was not the fastest thinker in the world. "You *like* that ship of yours?"

Andrey shuddered. "If they have to abandon me here, I won't survive

until the next ship comes.”

From the mudsider woman: **TRUTH, OFF-WORLDER?**

YES

“Your way won’t work.” Zan twisted her arms tighter, and Andrey’s own body flinched in sympathy. “Give her what she wants, she disappears out the door —” A sneer. “Nothing here worth coming back to, hers, spitplace. Once she’s gone, we never see her again, we’re out of luck —”

Her place, Andrey thought, looking around in admiration. Yes. Outward subtle beauty that reflected the inward loveliness he was finding more and more attractive. But first — “Listen, you can give her the — the chop, if it’s not too big, in such a way that she can’t get to it without me. So she has what she wants, but she can’t use it until you have what you want, because you won’t let me help her before you’re satisfied, don’t you see —”

Uncompromising. “No.”

Andrey fumbled at one of his belt-pouches. “This is a personal lock, nobody can open it but me. You hand over this chop, and once I put it inside, only I can take it out again. She can take it with her, know it’s safe; but she can’t use it until I’m free; and I won’t be free until you’re satisfied. Think it over. How can any of us lose?”

Wry amusement from the mudsider woman: **EASY. HE’LL KILL YOU**

DON’T UNDERESTIMATE ME — ‘SIDES, ANY CREWMEMBER CAN OPEN THE LOCK WHEN I SET IT RIGHT

“I won’t do it,” she snarled aloud. “I won’t —” Oddly, her defiance seemed to decide Zan.

“Yes, you will!” Zan gritted out. “You’ll do as I say —” He pulled back, one of his hands clamped in her short hair, until Andrey, sharing her pain through the Link, felt as if his own neck would snap and his scalp split, then Zan ground her face into the dirt. “I can keep this up all night and into tomorrow.” He wasn’t even panting. “You will —” His voice thickened. “I can run that chop across the bottom of more’n one order, y’know. And if I tried at night, during a storm, I might just be able to sneak the chopped order to my desk without anyone seeing me.” He chuckled, nastily. “My crew’s experienced. Lotsa different ways. And you wouldn’t even know what I did.”

She went limp under his hands.

“You’ll do it, won’tcha,” he gloated. “Spits ain’t got no guts, nohow.”

“I’ll do it,” she mumbled.

“Knew you would.” He rose with easy grace, ambled over to the table, taking an assortment of carved small oddments out of his pocket, and began fitting several of the smallest together, wrapping them with ribbons of eye-blindingly brilliant colors. “While I’m makin’ the chop,” he ordered casually, “you service the off-worlder. Says he needs it, get sick maybe die if he don’t have it.” The contempt was thick.

She rose herself, shrugging. But her lip, too, curled.

"No!" Andrey was frantic. "It's as bad too soon as too late, it's too soon —"

****HE WAS GOING TO KILL YOU — I HAD TO SAY SOMETHING****

Her shoulders drew in, her hands froze on the tie of the simple pants.

****CAN'T STAND TO TOUCH A SPIT, EITHER, CAN YOU — EXCEPT WITH A WHIP****

****THAT'S NOT IT — I ONLY WANTED TO PROTECT YOU — AND NOW — HE — I CAN'T****

Zan moved to the outside entrance, crouched to hold the oddity he had made in the rain, then came back in and rolled it over a sheet of some thin material he had spread out ready. "I said, get with it. Service him."

She shrugged and continued to untie her pants. "Not now," Andrey said firmly. ****I DON'T WANT YOU HURT — IN ANY WAY****

Zan continued rolling his construct over the paper, leaving a maze of multicolored trails, each with a different pattern. "You off-worlders," he said, amused. The woman, outwardly impassive, started tying her pants back together.

Andrey relaxed, watching Zan with an intent curiosity, mentally adding a bit of data that would eliminate a small controversy. So that was how the Rainbowers produced the chops, the intricate designs they used instead of signatures. A complex interlacing of odd shaped pieces with carvings on their ends, colored ribbons wrapping them, the whole wetted and rolled on paper to make a fantastic, yet repeating pattern. "Some of your mudsiders' customs seem as strange to us," he informed. Mentally: ****YOU'RE ANGRY. I DON'T UNDERSTAND. DID YOU WANT ME TO?****

She shrugged, her pants once again secured, and turned slightly away. He had the odd impression that she had erased him out of her world.

But you can't shut out a mind-to-mind link, once it's been established. ****IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU, YOU DON'T DISLIKE ME BECAUSE I'M CRIPPLED?****

****CRIPPLED? WHAT HAS THAT DO TO —****

****OH, IT'S MY BEING A PARIAH, THEN, A WOMBSHIPPER; YOU DON'T LIKE OFF-WORLDBERS. IT'S ALL RIGHT, I UNDERSTAND —**** Satisfied, he turned his attention to the odd process of making a chop.

****WHAT HAVE MY LIKES TO DO WITH IT?****

****EVERYTHING — TO A MIND-SENSITIVE****

Her mind went blank, and he blinked with surprise. A psi on a mindblind world should not be able to pull a trick that very few psis, long trained and accustomed to being among psis, are capable of. Then he remembered how she had seemed to shut him out of her physical senses, and realized that this was the mental equivalent of that trick. He wondered how many times she had had to shut herself away from some unpleasantness, to be so skilled at the withdrawal. Zan now —

****AFRAID OF HIM?**** Bitterness. ****YOU OFF-WORLDBERS ARE POWERFUL; HE'S AFRAID OF YOUR TOOLS AND WEAPONS; . . . BUT YOU AS AN INDIVID-**

UAL . . . IF THERE'S ANYTHING LOWER'N A SPIT, YOU'RE IT**

TO HIM He didn't like not being able to hear her, when she could obviously hear him, but there wasn't anything he could do about it. **AND TO YOU?**

YOU CAN'T KNOW WHAT HAVING SOMEBODY LOWER'N A SPIT DOES FOR ME!!!

The time while she was gone dragged slowly. Zan played what seemed like some sort of solitaire game, involving a set of notched sticks that he threw on the table, stared at, then slowly, one by one, lifted off, almost not breathing as he gently withdrew one after another from the pile. Andrey might not have been there, for all the attention Zan paid him; he lay quietly on the bench, seeming to drowse as the seconds and minutes ticked away with maddening slowness, like water dripping on a prisoner's head in some ancient torture.

Until he felt that new yet somehow familiar mind-touch again, strong and sure: **I'M BACK. BE READY TO ACT SURPRISED**

Andrey's reply was a mental snarl: **I TOLD YOU TO BRING A SQUAD. SEND THEM IN!**

THROUGH THAT CRAWLDOOR? HAH! YOUR PEOPLE AGREE, WOULDN'T WORK. ZAN'S TOO QUICK, TOO DANGEROUS. SNAP YOUR NECK IN A SECOND. THIS WAY'S THE ONLY WAY. YOUR TURN — FOLLOW MY LEAD

SEND THE SQUAD!!!

KNEW THAT'S HOW YOU'D REACT. TOUGH. ONLY ME, OFF-WORLDER. LIKE IT OR DRINK SPIT

He cursed loudly, and Zan jumped, looked over at him, sneered — and went back to his game or whatever it was.

She waited several minutes before hissing through the door, "It's me, Zan. I'm back, I'm coming in."

Zan jerked to his feet, and Andrey sat up and managed an expectant look.

She crawled through and stood up, shaking herself to get off droplets of rain.

"You got it," Zan's voice was eager.

"They think so." Her tone was noncommittal.

He clenched hard fists. "If it don't work —"

"Try it and see." She held out her hand. On her palm was a thin pale pink rectangle.

"It's the wrong color," he objected.

COLOR?? It was all happening too fast for Andrey.

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND YET? YOUR PEOPLE WERE QUICK ENOUGH. WHEN THAT PARIAH ZAPPED ZAN, HE LOST HIS — Aloud, "They say it won't be, in you. You peel off the outer wrapper and lay it against a piece of bare skin. It goes inside your body through the skin and when you can't see it any more, it's all absorbed. The process should take only a little longer

after that.”

“Process,” Zan scowled. “What’s in that thing?”

****YES, WHAT IS IN THAT THING? AND WHAT HAPPENED TO ZAN AND WHAT DO THEY THINK THIS WILL DO AND WHY —****

“They say,” she stared down at the small rectangle, and even Andrey couldn’t tell what she was thinking, “that it’s the same microbes that make the rain colored. Whatever microbes are.” Andrey nodded but Zan looked puzzled.

“Microbes are tiny animals,” Andrey explained, “so small you can’t see them, only the effects of their presence. Like color.” To the woman:
****COLOR!!! IS THAT IT? WHAT ALL THIS FUSS IS ABOUT?***

****FUSS YOU CALL IT — PARIAH, DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND YET? NOBODY HERE HAS SEEN A MICROBE, KNOW WHAT THEY ARE. YOUR COLOR IS THE OUTWARD SIGN OF WHAT YOU ARE. GOOD COLOR, GOOD PERSON. BAD COLOR —**** “The wombshippers say,” she recited it like a student with a memorized lesson, “that we’ve absorbed the microbes into our bodies, through the skin from the rain, and also breathed them in; and that’s what gives us our colors. You lost your color when the off-worlder zapped you, because of the heat from the energy that momentarily surrounded you. It was too quick to hurt you, but it killed the microbes in your skin. You lost your color. They say, you’d’ve gotten it back eventually, as you took in fresh microbes from the air and rain. After a while. This is a lot quicker, that’s all.”

Zan thought it over, probing the rectangle once with a cautious finger. “But humans aren’t the same color as the rain.”

“Because human bodies aren’t made of the same things as air or water. They explained it all to me, or tried to. We humans have absorbed the microbes for generations. And they’ve caused our different colors.”

He spat. “Our colors show what we are!”

****YOU SEE, PARIAH!**** She hunched a shoulder. “If you say so. All that matters is, what’s inside the osmos — that’s what they call it — will restore your color once it’s all inside you. And you’ll let the two of us go, then.”

“Yeah,” he nodded too eagerly. “Once I’m properly whip again, I’ll let you both go.”

“You —” She took a deep breath. “— may not be whip.”

“What!”

“They couldn’t be sure. They think a slightly different strain causes each color, and they couldn’t be sure which was which. This is their best guess. You could be anything.”

“Like spit,” he snarled.

****SPIT IS A COLOR?!?*** Andrey was still putting it all together.

“Oh, no,” a sad smile, “they had me to experiment with. You’ll be anything but spit.”

****I LIKE YOUR COLOR. I THINK IT’S ATTRACTIVE. NOT LIKE THAT UGLY**

OFF-RED HE WAS —**

NOBODY HERE WOULD AGREE WITH YOU. WHIP ISN'T MUCH; IT'S ORDINARY, BOTTOM OF THE LIST. BUT SPIT — SPIT ISN'T EVEN ON THE LIST AT ALL. SPIT ARE NON-PEOPLE; SPIT DOESN'T COUNT; ANYBODY WHO'S A REAL PERSON CAN DO ANYTHING TO A NON-PERSON, A SPIT Her lip curled sardonically. **WORK IT OUT, PARIAH. WHO TREATS YOU PARIAHS WORST, IF NOT THE PEOPLE ON THE BOTTOM OF WHATEVER HEAP THEY LIVE IN?*

Andrey didn't have to work it out. He felt sick. She was right. He didn't know personally, but he'd heard too many stories not to understand. It's people who have to truckle to those above them who are the worst to those who are in their power for some reason.

Zan was staring at the small packet and hesitating.

"You can't be worse than you are now," she pointed out wearily.

He snorted. "Yeah, even dead wouldn't be as bad — but if it kills me, I can't —" He glared at the other two.

"Here." She stripped away a thin sheet and laid the rectangle against her own arm. "You see. Harmless. No effect, really, except to you, to do what you want. They say that, in the human body, one strain eventually dominates, then the others can't survive. I wish it would affect me, change me. But it can't. As long as I have enough live microbes to show color, the others can't get a foothold. Pity. I wouldn't've come back. But as you can see —" She peeled it off slowly. "They put in a lot, figured you'd need convincing it was harmless. There's plenty left to do your job for you. All you have to do is put it on —"

It took a bit more cajoling, but eventually he was crouched between the other two and the door, scowling suspiciously, with a thin pink osmos on one Greek-sculpture muscled arm.

Time passed.

Andrey rubbed his legs, the woman paced, carefully staying out of arm's reach of the muttering Zan. Until —

"I think," he was staring down at himself, "do you see — color?"

The light was dim, and the woman came over and peered down. "No."

"Look," he pointed. "Color — and it's not dark!"

"They said it would be pale at first, it would take time for the microbes to do their work."

"Microbes, bleach! Dingy off-worlders, what do they know! I — I'm getting my real self! Whatever they did, make me wrong, it's just getting back right now. I knew they'd be able to undo what they did to me. Microbes, pasty-pale, off-worlder idiocy, nonsense, they can paralyze people, why not some other power that dims their personalities?"

Her nose was centimeters from his arm. "I think color is coming. Not whip, though. And definitely not spit."

"I could *never* be spit," he snarled. Then, a happy sigh, "Nor whip,

either. I knew I was more than whip all along. Do you think . . . class? I always knew I was class, deep down where it mattered, whatever it seemed at the time."

"**AHA! OFF-WORLDER, HE NEVER SAID HOW HE GOT IN TROUBLE IN THE FIRST PLACE, BUT LISTEN TO HIM! TRIED A LITTLE CROSSING, DID HE? THE —** Aloud, "Class, no, I think not, the hue seems too far off. I'd say shining, or maybe royal."

"Ahhhhhh," a beatific smile. "I knew, I knew —" A frown at his other arm. "It doesn't show as much there —"

"It will," she soothed. "They said it would spread from the primary site. It just takes time. When it finishes, you'll be the same all over."

"Yeah," he was almost literally glowing, "class."

An hour or so later, Andrey and the plum-colored woman were climbing into a wombship ground carrier, being helped by a couple of beaming crewmembers. "Didn't give you any trouble, did he?" a female medic was saying, bag open and ready. "I can check you out right here."

"No," the mudsider woman said calmly, "it all went smooth as sliding down the rainbow. He was so flushed from turning royal, he just waved us out. Even if I cried it to the world, who'd believe a spit? So why should he worry?"

"Drunk with being blue, I'd say," Andrey muttered.

"Off-worlder, you don't *know* —"

"Don't I?" He caught her gaze and held it.

She nodded, then turned to the crewmembers. "Did you have any trouble picking up the man I asked you to?"

"A little, at first." The medic, now seated next to the driver, turned around as they took off in a cloud of spray. "Chop or no, those mudsiders didn't like dealing with me. But when I said we'd been promised him to run experiments on, they laughed and turned him over."

The plum-colored woman leaned her head against the seat-back and let out a long sigh.

"They'd done a bit of dirt to him, but nothing we can't fix," the wombshipper medic went on. A sudden, woman-to-woman grin. "He wouldn't believe a word we told him. Sooner we join you two up, the better." The grin broadened. "Quite a man, that. Your husband, eh?"

A stiffening. "Spits aren't allowed to marry."

Diplomacy was inbred in the space-travelers. "Well, we wombshippers are more broad-minded. Want to get married, fine. Or not, your business and nobody else's."

Andrey felt himself shrinking inside.

The mudsider woman, sensitive, responded instantly: **DID YOU THINK IT WAS A KALEIDOSCOPE-TALE ENDING, OFF-WORLDER? INSTANT ATTRACTION, AND THE TWO OF US RIDING OFF INTO SUNSET GLORY TOGETHER

ON YOUR WOMBSHIP? **

NO, I JUST — HAD HOPES

I UNDERSTAND A sensation as though someone gently patted his hand. **BUT I CAN'T GIVE YOU WHAT SOMEBODY ELSE ALREADY HAS. IF — IF SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO MY MAN, MY GEM . . . WHO KNOWS? AS IT IS . . . I DON'T KNOW YOUR WAYS YET, BUT I'LL FIND SOME WAY TO REPAY YOU . . . IN TIME**

TIME? BUT WE'LL BE LEAVING IN A COUPLE MORE CYCLES —

I KNOW. WE'RE GOING ABOARD YOUR SHIP, MY GEM AND I — GOING WHERE NOBODY CARES WHAT COLOR YOUR SKIN IS —

BUT LOTS OF WORLDS HATE WOMBSHIPPERS — WHAT DO YOU THINK THE TERM PARIAH MEANS

I KNOW THAT, TOO. BUT YOU PARIAHS DON'T HATE FELLOW PARIAHS, AND YOU SPEND MORE OF YOUR TIME IN SPACE, WITH EACH OTHER, THAN ON A PLANET

I SEE Very stiff upper lip.

DO YOU, OFF-WORLDER? Something was making her laugh inside, though her face was solemn, her body slumped in exhaustion against the padded seat back. **SOMETHING ELSE YOUR PEOPLE TOLD ME ABOUT MICROBES. SEEMS DEAD ONES CAN SOMEHOW POISON THE LIVING ONES —**

IMMUNIZATIONS He understood immediately. His duties aboard ship included medical. He had cooked up inoculations, knew the theory. **NOT AS MUCH THAT DEAD ONES POISON THE LIVING, AS THAT THE HUMAN BODY HAS DEFENSES AGAINST OUTSIDE INVASIONS. AND SOMETIMES DEAD MICROBES TRIGGER THOSE DEFENSES, WITHOUT THE ILL EFFECTS THAT LIVING MICROBES CAN CAUSE. IF ZAN IS NOW IMMUNIZED AGAINST THE MICROBES OF YOUR WORLD . . .**

Infinite glee, as though a plum-purple eye had winked at him. Mentally, she was almost purring. **THEY THINK ZAN IS. OTHERWISE HE'D'VE SHOWN SIGNS OF GETTING HIS COLOR BACK BEFORE NOW. THE MICROBES DEEP INSIDE HIS BODY SHOULD HAVE SURVIVED, EVEN IF THE HEAT AROUND HIM MADE HIM RUN A TEMPORARY FEVER. BUT IF HIS BODY CHANGED SOMEHOW . . . ZAN GOT A MASSIVE DOSE OF MICROBES THIS TIME. TAKE A WHILE FOR THEM TO DIE. BUT — ALL THE COLORS, SO YOUR PEOPLE CLAIMED, ARE CLOSELY RELATED. ZAN'S MICROBES WILL DIE AGAIN. AND SO WILL HIS COLOR. FOREVER.**

He whistled softly. And sent, not meaning to: **YOU MAKE A BAD ENEMY. IF IT HADN'T WORKED OUT THIS WAY, YOU'D'VE ARRANGED SOMETHING ELSE, WOULDN'T YOU**

Unashamed. **YES** Then, almost a mental mutter, **OFF-WORLDER, YOU DON'T KNOW —** Again the sensation of a hand being patted. **BUT I THINK — I'VE NEVER HAD MUCH OF A CHANCE — I'LL MAKE A GOOD FRIEND. AND FRIENDSHIP CAN MEAN SOMETHING, TOO, A LOT —**

* * *

Quite a lot. Andrey stared down at his newborn son with wondering awe. Beside him, his blind sister Omalie used his eyes, and he could feel her pleasure as strong as his own.

"He's spit-purple, like us." On the planet Rainbow, spit were not allowed names. Aboard the wombship, finally understanding, the purple-colored man the chop had rescued had chosen to be known by the love-sobriquet given him by the spit/nameless woman he couldn't marry — on Rainbow. Now he was Gem, and one hand held the toddler that was his and his now-wife's, and the other supported Omalie, though the blind wombshipper's pregnancy — courtesy of Gem's fertility, his wife's generosity, and the medical skills of the wombshippers — was a barely noticeable bulge in her delicate slenderness.

The knife-edge wit he'd come to know and appreciate slipped into Andrey's mind. ****I WONDER IF HE'D BEEN SO QUICK TO AGREE TO THIS IF YOUR PEOPLE WEREN'T SO SKILLED IN ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION**** The blue-purple woman who now called herself Plum was exhausted, yet bubbling with her accomplishment.

****ABOUT AS QUICK AS YOU'D'VE BEEN TO LET HIM FATHER MY CHILD NATURALLY**** Omalie inserted.

Sly mockery from the ex-mudsider Plum: ****BUT YOU'RE MY FRIEND, LEE. ONE SHARES THE WEALTH WITH ONE'S FRIENDS****

Omalie and Andrey burst out laughing, and Gem, used by now to the other three's quick mind-exchanges, was quick to demand an explanation. "Oh," he gave Omalie an assessing, up-and-down look that was half pure lascivious male and half mischievous teasing, "if I'd known that was what you had in mind, Lee, I'd've jumped to volunteer —"


A medic stuck her head into the gaily decorated room. "Watch your minds, you four, you'll have half the other patients demanding shields —" But it was an Occasion, all births aboard the ironically named Wombships were, and she stayed to drink a toast in bubbly to the newest crewmember before heading away to resume her duties.

Another medic shooed the three out finally, and as they were going through the door, Plum sent a final message. ****OMALIE, ANDREY, YOUR TIME WILL COME. YOU'LL FIND YOU OWN RAINBOW'S END, SOMEDAY****

Andrey flicked a glance at his sister's blind eyes, and at his own withered legs encased in the synthi exoskeleton, and smiled. ****AND IF NOT, WE HAVE YOUR GIFTS OF FRIENDSHIP, DO WE NOT****

His back was to her, he could only feel her smile, not see it. ****PATIENCE, MY FRIEND. YOU HAVE YOUR SON NOW, AND OMALIE'S CHILD TO COME. THEY ARE PRECIOUS, BUT YOU BOTH KNOW WHAT THE GREATEST TREASURE OF ALL IS —**** A flood of pure love, Gem's really, but the overflow gave both Andrey and Omalie a warm glow. ****YOUR COMPLETION, YOUR OTHER HALF. YOU'RE YOUNG YET, AND YOUR WOMBSHIP CROSSES THE PATH OF MANY OTHERS. AND SINCE GEM AND I HAVE SETTLED IN SO WELL,**

YOUR CAPTAIN HAS DECIDED TO RECRUIT MORE VIGOROUSLY FROM THE
WORLDS WE ORBIT. LONELY WOMBSHIPPER, LONELY NATIVE, THEY'RE OUT
THERE WAITING FOR YOU. SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME, WILL BE YOUR PLACE
AND TIME**

Space is wide, and even the most evanescent rainbow must have an end
somewhere. But not all rainbows' ends contain a pot of gold. Sometimes
they simply . . . end. On the planet called Rainbow, the man Zan stared at
his pasty-pink skin in horrified disbelief. This time, there were no wombers
orbiting, to force to give him back his color. This time — 

INTEGERS

By the numbers,
by your leave;
bye and bye,
If you please.

We the consoles —
“gods” to you —
we creators
of you few

who survived
the awful blast;
all can hope
the peril's past.

All there is
or ever was
is safe within
this other Oz.

Safe within
without a doubt;
the trick is now
to get you out.

What we need
and sorely lack
are integers
to bring you back:

integers of commonplace,
a photo of a well-loved face,
memories of peace and grace —
whatever of you we can trace

bye and bye,
if you please;
by the numbers,
by your leave.

— Richard Wilson

GOOMBAH ON THE HILL

by T. Erin March

art: Doug Chaffee



There is something universal about the appeal of fantasy that must greatly trouble publishers who think in categories. The author's seven-year-old son approved of this story highly and foresaw acceptance and, voilà!

T. Erin March has had a story in Alfred Hitchcock's; this is her first appearance in Amazing®.

In the center of a cluster of deep-green hills they call Udainee, on the very tallest hill itself — and I would even be forgiven for calling it a mountain (by all, that is, but the sun-reachers of the farthest East) — there lived a hag. Hers was a stilted house; and if you are used to seeing such shacks with their high spindly legs only on flood-plains and by river-mouths, then think again, for even the churning River Hiss never rose high enough to threaten this door; nor would it dare, not even in its muddiest and fastest-rising dreams. It was for other reasons than keeping the dirtied hems of her thin skirts dry that the hag lived high on four wooden beams.

For one thing, wooden legs, unlike her own (and even though they were almost as thin and pock-marked and rickety), didn't feel the pinch of splinter-sharp stones flung by children. They didn't bleed beneath the worrying teeth of curs or blister at the low thrust of a torch. Not that any dogs or children or red-faced, sweating villagers would dare come near her now, her reputation secure; but the hag had a long memory — of unkindnesses and witch-hunts, being jeered at or being chased, through brambles and bogs, by men and women with rakes raised high and voices shrilling. A long life and a long memory — both of these the hag was cursed with. So four wooden legs it was, and a narrow door at the top big enough for one man only to pass through with ease, and he must be a stooped and scrawny one at that.

And the high-stilted hut served another purpose, too; for beneath it, as everyone at the time knew well, and as safe among those beams as the hag was over them, lived the Goombah.

There was much speculation, in Udainee and out, about the Goombah. Was it male, was it female? Was it, some suggested, both? Descendant of warthog, dragon, primate, or priest? No one seemed to know and if the hag herself did, she wasn't telling. To her it was just the Goombah.

For many life-times, the hag ducked her head out of the door each morning into the low-hanging mist and twisted it sideways to see the smoke from her fire spreading over her roof like a second ceiling of fog, or a ghost reaching out pale and crab-like. Sometimes she would climb down to gather dry sticks for her meager fire, the Goombah moaning to her all the while, or to catch bare-handed (if that's what you could call her gray and clutching claws) a rabbit or a deer and skin and spit it for the next week or month's worth of meals. But on clear days, she would go back inside, gather up and tighten each muscle of her back and legs, and, quivering like a cat, leap for the rope that hung down through the smoke-hole and over her fire. Clinging there, she'd warm her heels over the coals for an instant, then clamber up and out onto the roof. It became a more difficult task each year, this, not because of the hag's great age, which troubled her little, but because the hanging rope *would* singe and blacken and smoke no matter how often she fire-proofed it with her mixture of herbs and mutterings and faintly occult threats. Only the damp kept it from catching altogether, and each year its

blackened end crumbled a little shorter. Yet the effort was worth her while; for, once on the roof, the hag sat above all of Udainee, like a toad on a rock, the grizzled hairs of her head the highest point of the land.

Since the hag lived at the highest point of Udainee, a position well-suited for surveying its nooks and crannies, green shallows and rocky protuberances all, it was clear to everyone that she owned the land — and this despite the fact that she neither farmed it nor forested it, made no effort to keep some folk in and other folk out, and fought no wars to increase its size. It was said that some past potentate of farther reaches had given it to her long ago in a clearly misbegotten gesture of affection or gratitude. The thought that the hag had once been young and comely and honey-tongued and had so earned favor left many a farmer slack-jawed with wonder. But, however she had come to Udainee, the land was hers.

Now just as the hag, the stilted house, and the Goombah had always been in Udainee, so had the knowledge that to woo and marry the hag was to gain ownership of the land. Udainee, so the saying went and was believed, would be her wedding gift. (No one except the hag herself wondered what the groom's gift might be.) For the hag, the prophecy was an eternal curse and a bewilderment and, if she had known who started it, he would not have lived long to enjoy the discomfiture it caused her. The prophecy, however, went unfulfilled.

Many died in the attempt to marry the hag. It was a quick, probably even a painless, death. The Goombah ate each suitor before he could brace one thick-booted foot on the first unsteady rung of the ladder leading up to the hag's front door. A few would try, and be eaten; their deaths soon forgotten, a new generation of ambitious or brave or stupid men would try. As time went on their deaths became less quick. The Goombah grew older and slower, less interested in chasing men between and around the stilts of the hut. It let them get away, ascend the gray, splintered ladder and woo away, while it waited patiently at the bottom, jaws open.

Inside the hut, the suitors found the hag as wicked and irritable and evil-smelling as she was ugly, a fact they never had a chance to pass on to others. Many of them descended immediately, all thoughts of marriage forgotten, and were eaten. Others determinedly stayed and did their best, their lives depending on the silly words that came from their mouths. They spoke eloquently of the hag's beauty and kindness — and then were eaten. Only a minority resorted to honesty. Certain they were the first to be so inspired (they were not), these men praised the hag's nastiness, her abundance of warts, the coarse wrinkled skin of her throat, the corns on her feet, and her breasts like pale, elongated yams. They, too, were sent back down the ladder and were eaten. Then the hag would contentedly resume squatting by her fire and sucking cracked bones, arguing with the sated Goombah through the gaping chinks in the floor until the next man arrived to spoil their pleasure. As time went on and the world grew smaller, this happened more

often.

One day there arrived a man who was different. Safely passing the Goombah while it slept off indigestion from the last caller, he wasted no time on flattery but, once in the hut, climbed straight up the rope through the smoke-hole (a tight fit) and onto the roof. The hag, admiring the way the mud on his boots cracked over the fire while he was stuck, followed him up. His plan, evident in the way his stubbed beard blackened around the corners of his mouth, was to push the hag from the roof-top. Udaine would then, he was certain, be his; and, if questioned, he planned to tell how she had slipped from the roof in an ecstasy of happiness upon their betrothal. How he would have dealt with the Goombah (which, truth to tell, he had forgotten) will never be known; for the hag gave her suitor a shove well before he could do the same to her and, with a great slipping and waving of arms and shouting, he fell off the roof and down the side of the hill. The Goombah, despite the fact that it preferred live meat, ventured out from under the hut and ate the remains. The hag praised it for an obliging beast, but its indigestion, it is true, had passed.

After this incident the hag sat in her doorway, dangling her whiskered legs and kicking the ladder above the Goombah's head in an irritating way. In a voice unused to speech of any kind but argument, she snapped out, "I'll have you know I plan to marry the next man who comes to this door."

The Goombah abruptly ceased its shuffling in the mud and, as both priest and warthog ancestors were wont to do, snorted derisively.

"I mean it. I will," the hag insisted. "We can't go on like this. No peace, day or night. When do I have the leisure to pick my toes or toast my backside by the fire? And look at you after this diet of humans, and all of them men at that! You have four chins and your hair is falling out. You mutter in your sleep; there are circles under your eyes. It's for your sake, really," the hag lied plaintively.

The Goombah moaned.

"It's settled then," she rasped. She sat for a long time and idly scratched its back with her thick, yellow toenails. "Besides," she added, "if we get tired of him, we can always eat him."

The Goombah sniffed and agreed.

But no suitors arrived for nearly a week, and the hag almost lost her resolve in the pleasure of being left alone. And then the one who did appear was so unprepossessing, so spindly and unformed, so bereft of any physical strength or attributes that she instantly changed her mind. She stomped on the floor with her heel to waken the Goombah to its unexpected breakfast. But the man was already up the ladder.

The thin man with wide, sagging cheeks, concave chest, and jutting shoulder bones stood silently, looking about the hut. Without waiting for the inevitable wooing to begin, the hag indicated the smoke-hole.

"Care to take in the view?" she croaked. She thought she'd dispense with

this one as quickly as she had the last.

But, unexpectedly, her caller was on his hands and knees, exploring the grit and dust of the hut floor. He found an old finger bone (human) and turned it over and over, held it close to his right eye and as far away as his arm would reach, and was just about to pop it in his mouth as a small child would when the hag spoke again.

"Eh?" she said loudly.

The man started and clambered to his feet, dropping the bone. He smiled a sheepish smile.

"Uh —" he responded. "I came to ask — uh — what is it you *do* with all the men who come here to ask you to marry them? No bones are ever found, you know, and there's never been a decent burial, or so my mother tells me. They used to bury a chicken now and then in proxy, I've heard it said —" He stopped short to watch a fly land on a drip from the pot near the fire and become instantly stuck, witnessing its death-throes with fascination until their satisfying end. Then he seemed to notice the hag again.

"And I wondered," he resumed, "does all this wooing annoy you very much? — I suppose it must or you'd let them return home, maybe with just a curse on their souls or a cactus spine in their ear, eh?" He stared with great interest at the hag, his eyes the most curious blue she had ever seen.

The hag, in the meantime, stood stunned. It was the first time in her life anyone but the Goombah had asked her opinion. She lost her heart then and there (temporarily, of course) and she and Tull, for this was the man's name, were married the next day. And even the reluctant Goombah had a good time at the wedding, eating Tull's old aunt, who everyone was hoping would die soon anyway, and relishing the thinner bones and slightly richer taste of a female.

Just as the hag's love did not outlast the honeymoon (spent of course in the stilted hut), neither did Tull's interest in her. She soon found his eyes dulled over with sated wonderment each time he looked at her, and they only brightened when he came across a new pile of rubbish beneath a stool or some new mystery in the hut for him to poke at — the pattern of grease spots on paper that had wrapped old cheese, where in the hut the smell of sardines originated (the hag?), guessing, with eyes closed, the number of teeth on a broken comb. But, despite his great curiosity, Tull's brain held little. When something new went in, something old came out; and a month after their marriage, he had forgotten all the answers the hag had given to his original, persistent questioning and he looked at her again with renewed passion — his desire to know. The hag snarled at him obligingly when he pestered her with questions and, in general, the marriage was a success.

To spite the old rumor that had given her so much trouble over many centuries of age, the hag did not give Udaince to her mate. This was a decision that the Goombah applauded with much amused and stertorous breathing, but also one her husband himself never noticed. Curiosity, not avarice, had

brought Tull to the hut and now he too climbed up the rope and squatted at the highest point of the land, surveyed it with limitless interest and, just like her, sought to do nothing with it. Had he considered the matter, he might have decided that, by these virtues alone, he was as much owner as she. But it never crossed his mind. Eight months after asking the hag what she thought, he was so busy with a pair of squalling twins that very little crossed his mind at all and he went several weeks without even examining the grime under his own fingernails.

So the marriage produced children.

Tull's relations, people to whom empty convention apparently meant a great deal, came to see the new babies. Once in the hut, they asked each other with game seriousness which parent the babies most resembled and nodded and smiled in response to each other. None but a child of five gave the true answer, before he was promptly shushed. "The Goombah!" he shrilled. "They look like the Goombah!"

The hag continued to produce children sullenly, in twos and threes, until finally Tull lost interest in siring them (or perhaps forgot how to go about it). By that time he was old himself, and long ago the older children had begun watching after the younger and taking turns going after Tull when he wandered off to see where a bee was flying to or to detain a passing child and inquire if she really did enjoy marbles. Even the most difficult chore — making sure the Goombah did not forget itself and nibble at a toddler or eat the she-goat they kept for milk (for the hag refused to suckle the babies for more than a minimum of time) — passed from Tull to the eldest child.

And when the last of the offspring was gone, away from the hill and out of Udainee as they all were destined to go, it was Tull who looked as if he'd been pregnant for the better part of twenty years. His eyes were tired and sad, his teeth yellowed and broken. His skin hung loosely. He began less and less to wander off. Instead he dithered in circles about the hut, his hands clutching at each other, always certain he heard a child outdoors being eaten. Of the many things he forgot in his lifetime, now one left a gaping hole in his mind — he forgot that his children no longer needed him.

Tull was as useless to the hag now — for well she knew what his wedding gift had been — as the dried-up old she-goat still tethered to a bush. She asked the Goombah to eat her husband, but it refused. She knew the Goombah had always disliked Tull and did not press the issue. Instead they both hoped he would wander off for good. With the children gone, they should have some peace at last; but the worrying and muttering of the hag's husband irritated the Goombah no end, and once again it was not sleeping well.

In a fit of annoyance the hag took Tull up to the roof. But once there, he clung to the edges of the smoke-hole, nervous of the height and worried about a possible change in the weather. After four decades of warning children against a multitude of dangers, he'd become as timid and half-witted as a bird. The only thing he did not fear (foolishly) was the hag. Sighing, the

hag found herself squeamish about giving him the final shove. She left him up there weeping and banked the fire high, but he eventually found his way down and refused after that to go up on the roof again.

Eventually Tull did die — of old age — although it was a day or two before the hag noticed. The maa-ing of the hungry goat Tull refused to part with attracted her attention and, upon descending the ladder to the ground, she found her husband peacefully curled up and dead, his head in the ashes of a spent fire. A few weeks later, a strong wind blew what was left of him away.

Then for the hag and the Goombah all was as it had been a paltry half-century before. They lived until the goat also died and its bones withered away, until the climate changed and people grew taller and then seemed to disappear. And even if there had been people around, the hag would never again have been tempted by human company. She and the Goombah cared for each other well, gossiped about each other's faults in whines and sneers, and enjoyed their leisure and privacy.

But then people began again to come to Udainee, attracted by the round green hills and the clear brown water of the Hiss, and with them came the return of the prophecy. One cold gray morning a suitor appeared. The Goombah, waking out of a deep sleep, ate him instinctively. But it suffered heartburn afterwards, and its plaintive croon rose up through the chinks in the floor and through the smoke-hole to where the hag squatted on her roof in the early-morning fog. She twitched at the sound but, for seven days after that, did not move. The whole time the thick mist pressed wet and gray against her face and folded arms and she saw nothing below of Udainee besides her own knobby knees and what her inner sight remembered. She heard, but did not listen to, the desperate gulping and gobbling of the Goombah below, as it fended off more and more suitors.

Then, slowly, slowly, as if each muscle had begun finally to feel its age, as if the damp had at last stiffened the joints in her hips and knees, as if those long-ago flung stones had indeed caused some poorly-mended injury, the hag climbed down the rope. She trampled the ashes of the long-dead fire absently, graying her heels, and then she went down the ladder. She crawled under the hut. And there, like a long mating ritual that each had always known, she and the Goombah circled each other and, very gently, with much soft snapping and sucking and tearing, they ate and ate and ate each other up until not a bite of either was left. And when the wind blew the mist away and wound itself about the stilts and slipped through the floor-cracks and rushed down the smoke-hole of the hut, it found not a single shard of bone to whistle over nor one coarse hair to steal.



PROTECTING YOUR SCIENCE-FICTION COLLECTION

by Fred Lerner

FACT

The author, a librarian by profession, is equally concerned with the content as with the physical embodiment of books. Look for his Modern Science Fiction and the American Literary Community from Scarecrow Press. And the very sound of literature . . .

He has been reading to his firstborn, Elizabeth Jane, since she was three months old — beginning with the splendid sonorities of Beowulf in the original Anglo-Saxon.

There was once a time when to be a science-fiction fan was to be an impoverished youth. When Isaac Asimov was a beginning writer, he would take the subway into midtown New York to hand in manuscripts, because a ten-cent round trip cost less than postage. SF magazines cost ten or fifteen cents. Nobody worried about the cost of science-fiction books; they were so few as to be practically nonexistent.

But times improved. Teenagers today have a lot more pocket money than did their fathers. Still, there's a very good chance that anyone who has been collecting science fiction for even a short time has a more valuable collection than he realizes. Anyone who owns a valuable asset should be thinking of how to protect it. And that's what this article is about.

Protecting your science-fiction collection . . . from what? From all sorts of things: from fire and flood, from heat and humidity, from theft and carelessness, and from the day-to-day use, be it scholarly research or pleasure reading, for which you bought your books in the first place. It's possible to go to extremes: "If you really want to keep a book," one expert advises, "you should dry it out, wrap it in plastic and stick it in the deep freeze. At -20°F to -30°F they should last several thousand years."¹ But unless your concern is to leave an endowment for your heirs, you might as well not have bought a single book. I'm going to assume that your collection, however modest or grand in extent, was purchased for use rather than speculation. But I'm also going to assume that you want to preserve it for as long as possible, both for your own life-long use and for the eventual benefit of your children — or your favorite research library.

The first thing to consider is insurance. If you have homeowner's insur-

ance, check the coverage on your personal property. Typically, your personal effects (furniture, household appliances, clothing, books) are insured for an amount equal to half the face value of your policy. If your house is insured for \$60,000, your personal property is covered for \$30,000. In any case, there is no substitute for becoming familiar with your policy and its provisions, and especially with any limitations which might apply to books, manuscripts, or works of art. Materials not covered by an ordinary policy can be insured under a special policy, which should be available from your insurance company or through any insurance broker.

If you are in any way a professional or semi-professional collector of science fiction — as, say, a free-lance writer, a part-time bookseller, or even a fanzine publisher — you would do well to make sure that any such work doesn't come under an exclusion of business activity from residential coverage. For a modest sum — in my case it's less than three percent of my annual premium — you can add coverage for home office activities.

If you're buying insurance, you have to know what you're insuring. And if you have to make a claim under your policy, your insurer is going to want some documentation of your loss and its value. So you're going to need to take an inventory of your collection, and get some idea of what it's worth.

The easiest way to do this is to make a list of the books and other treasures in your collection, and supplement your list with photographs illustrating your inventory. It's also a good idea to collect some bookseller's catalogs which include contemporary prices for the major items in your library, and any receipts which establish what you paid for manuscripts, paintings, or other unique artifacts. All this documentation should be kept separate from your collection, preferably in a safe-deposit box. If your library goes up in flames, you don't want your catalog to join it.

I used the word "catalog"; my library training is showing. But think about it for a moment. You're going to the trouble of making a list of your books; and if it's to be ample documentation of the more valuable items in your collection, it will have to be more than a mere list of authors and titles. If you have any first editions, limited editions, autographed or inscribed volumes, association copies, or anything else out of the ordinary, you'll want to record their distinguishing features. And if you're going to all this effort, why settle for a mere checklist?

A catalog of your collection would have plenty of uses. Not only would it furnish a record of what you own, but it can be indexed by author, title, and subject. It can tell you just where a particular book or magazine might be, if you're forced by limited space or an itinerant lifestyle to keep your collection scattered or in storage. It can help you to keep track of books you lend to friends. And it can prevent you from inadvertently buying a duplicate copy of a book you already have.

There are several ways to go about cataloging your collection. You can study the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules and the International Standard

Bibliographic Description, and produce a catalog the Library of Congress would be proud to call its own. You can enter all the relevant information into your home computer, using a program of your own devising or buying off-the-shelf software for the purpose. (But beware: a computerized library catalog uses up a *lot* of memory.) Or you can do it the easy way.

I catalog my library using the book order forms that librarians use to order books from wholesalers. These cost less than five cents each from library supply houses;² the minimum quantity is 500. They're designed for use with a typewriter, but a ball-point pen will work fine. Each form produces five copies, four on NCR carbonless paper and one on card stock. I put one copy of each form into my safe-deposit box; one is filed by author; one by subject; one by call number;³ and one copy goes into the file I bring with me when I go book-hunting.

Class No	AUTHOR		
PX	Bova, Ben		
List Price	TITLE		
320	Viewpoint		
Date Ordered	Edition or Series		Volumes
.B6			
Date Rec'd.	Place	Publisher	Year
Dealer	Cambridge MA	NESFA Press	1977
No. of Copies	Recommended by	Fund Charged	Cost
Order No.	Boskone XIV book		
	Limited to 750 copies		
	Inscribed by author		
	d/w		
L.C. Card			

As the illustration shows, each order slip has a printed space for the author and title of the book, as well as room to indicate the edition and imprint. At the bottom of the form, where an acquisitions librarian would enter the fund charged and the person recommending the title, I note any relevant details which might affect the value of the book: condition, presence or absence of a dust jacket, any autographs or inscriptions, any associational interests (such as previous ownership by a famous writer, scholar, or collector), and the number of the volume if it is part of a limited edition. At the left side of the slip I record the book's location in my library.

So for a minimum of expense and effort I have not only an insurance record of my science-fiction library, but also a way of determining what I have and where I have it. I don't lend my books often, but when I do I note

on the appropriate card who borrowed the item and when he took it. The system works so well for science fiction that I'm thinking of extending it to the rest of my books.

Fine. You've got your collection cataloged, and you've taken good clear close-up photos of your shelves, which you and a witness have signed and dated. You've placed these records in your safe-deposit box, and you've taken out a proper insurance policy — and made sure to keep the premiums paid. Your collection is protected, and you can sit back and relax. Right?

Well, not exactly. . . .

Insurance allows you to recoup your financial losses. But it won't make it possible for you to replace a lost Heinlein manuscript or an autographed copy of *The Lord of the Rings* or a long-out-of-print Arkham House classic. Insurance is great; but better than insurance is preventing loss or damage to your collection in the first place.

There are some elementary precautions to take. If you don't have a smoke alarm and a fire extinguisher in your home, get both NOW. There's more than your science-fiction collection at stake. Before you move anything into the basement of a new home, be sure that it's protected from flood damage. Check with your neighbors to see if your basement floods after heavy rains or the spring snowmelt. If you're uncertain, keep your books well above floor level.

Think twice before letting your local newspaper do a feature article on your collection. There's no point in going out of your way to attract the attentions of a potential burglar. If your collection, like mine, derives its value from the quantity of its contents rather than the rarity of any single items it contains, the danger is lessened. But if you own original Lovecraft manuscripts or Tolkien's personal copy of *Beowulf*, you might sleep a bit more soundly at night if you kept your treasures in a good stout safe — or in the vault of your neighborhood bank.

There are more subtle dangers to your collection. Fire destroys books quickly; heat destroys them slowly. Floodwaters will ruin your books, but so will high humidity. Light can fade dust jackets and paintings. Careless handling can break bindings and tear pages. Cramped quarters can lead to crumpled books. And rodents and insects — not to mention rambunctious dogs and small children — can tear your collection to shreds.

The most insidious threat comes from your books themselves. The sizing used on wood-pulp paper — and the vast majority of twentieth-century books and magazines are printed on wood-pulp — gives off acid which weakens the paper and makes it brittle. Extremes of temperature and humidity accelerate this weakening process. Chemists and book conservators have developed processes for neutralizing acid in book paper,⁴ but it's not feasible for an individual collector to use them. But there are preventive measures that you can take.

Keep your books in a cool, dry place. A temperature of 70°F is recom-

mended by experts, along with a relative humidity of 50%. At 95°F a book can deteriorate ten times faster than at 70°F, while mildew can become a serious problem at 70% humidity. If you have to keep your collection in a damp basement, a dehumidifier may be a good investment; and the protection of your library is an excellent excuse for air-conditioning your study.

Be sure to consider the possibility of rodent or insect damage to books kept in out-of-the-way areas. Wrapping stored books in plastic or packing mothballs in storage boxes can help to keep them safe; if you prefer the organic approach to pest control, get a good barn cat.

An adequate supply of sturdy bookshelves, equipped with heavy-duty bookends, will keep your collection accessible and intact. Don't crowd too many books onto a shelf; this can damage bindings and rip spines. Be careful in planning your shelving. Books are heavier, volume for volume, than most household objects, and knick-knack shelves or hi-fi stands might not be able to take the weight. And be careful to load your bookshelves from the bottom up, to maintain their stability. (Don't put all the heavy books on top; and don't assume that paperbacks are lighter than hardcovers — book paper is heavier than binder's cloth.)

Don't allow strong sunlight to shine directly onto your bookshelves or paintings, and be sure not to leave what you're currently reading on a sunny window-ledge (or out in the rain!). And if you have small children, or if grandchildren are frequent visitors, you'll want to find some way of keeping your bookshelves off limits to small fingers.

If you collect hardcover books, you'll have to decide what to do with dust jackets. They may be a nuisance, but resist the temptation to discard them: any book, regardless of edition, is considerably more valuable with its jacket than without. (I've seen a bookseller advertise a fine first edition of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for \$200 with the jacket — and a copy in the same condition without the jacket for only \$75.) You can keep book jackets in a drawer, which at least preserves them intact. But a better solution is to cover them with plastic, just as your local public library does.

You'll find several different types of book jacket covers in library supply catalogs. A starter kit of 100 covers in assorted sizes will cost about ten dollars. They're easy to use, and they'll protect your jackets from tearing, sweaty palms, and spilled liquids. Booksellers put them on their treasures; there's no reason you shouldn't do the same.

Be careful not to use bookmarks that might stain or damage your books, and be especially wary of placing in your books any paper which might have a high acid content. Newspaper clippings can be dangerous. If you have peripheral materials which you want to keep with a particular book, place them in an acid-free envelope or folder; and it wouldn't hurt to use only bookmarks made from acid-free paper.

If you have any manuscript material in your collection, be sure to leave it intact. Don't ever punch holes in a novel manuscript to put it into a binder,

and don't staple together the pages of a short story. Don't even use metal paper clips, which can cause stains if they rust. The best way to store manuscripts is in folders or boxes especially designed for archival use. These come in many different sizes, and are manufactured from acid-free materials; they're available from library and museum suppliers. A storage box big enough to hold a full-length book manuscript costs as little as three dollars; for the same price you can buy enough folders for a dozen short manuscripts and a box to store them in.

Acid-free containers are also available for books, prints, and pamphlets; and specialist suppliers also carry mending and repair materials.⁵ I don't advise do-it-yourself work on valuable documents; truly precious materials should be entrusted to an expert professional book restorer. At all costs, avoid using cellophane tape on torn pages or dust jackets: it yellows with time and leaves a sticky residue, and eventually turns brittle and falls off, leaving discolored and damaged paper as a reminder of your bad judgement. If you want to learn how to repair damage to routine items in your collection, begin by studying an introductory text on book restoration, and practice on inexpensive books which can easily be replaced.⁶

What about inscribing your name in your books? Some collectors feel that bookplates, embossed stamps, or writing your name on the flyleaf all diminish the value of books; and I've seen booksellers' catalogues that reflect that sentiment in their prices. Others maintain that a tastefully-engraved bookplate, carefully centered on the front end-paper, can only enhance the value of the book to which it is applied. If you lend your books — not that I suppose that anyone seriously concerned with keeping his collection in optimum condition would do any such thing — then you certainly should mark them. But choose your bookplate or label design carefully, and be sure it's made from acid-free paper.

I've only been able to touch on the basics of protecting your science-fiction collection. You can get more information at your local public or academic library. It's worth the time and trouble. A bit of effort directed toward protecting your collection will ensure you of a lifetime of enjoyment from your favorite science fiction, and may well prolong its pleasure and value for your descendants.

1. Henry Kelly, quoted in Janet Raloff, "Halting Untimely Book Ends," *Science News* 123 (5 March 1983): 154-156.


2. The four major American library supply houses are:
Brodart Inc., 1609 Memorial Avenue, Williamsport, PA 17705
Demco, PO Box 7488, Madison, WI 53707
Gaylord Brothers Inc., PO Box 4901, Syracuse, NY 13321
Highsmith Company, PO Box 800A, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538.

3. The call numbers are taken from my Fantasy Collection Classification

Scheme, which is set forth in my article on "The Cataloging and Classification of Science Fiction Collections," *Special Collections* 2, no. 1/2 (1982), pp. 151-170. This issue was also published in book form as *Science/Fiction Collections* (New York: Haworth Press, 1982).

4. These are described in Janet Raloff's article in *Science News*, cited in note 1.

5. An extensive catalog of archival quality materials for conservation, restoration, and preservation is available from University Products, Inc., PO Box 101, Holyoke, MA 01041.

6. The National Preservation Program Office of the Library of Congress has issued an annotated bibliography, "Preservation of Library Materials: First Sources" (Preservation Leaflet No. 1, March 1982), which is available for consultation at many public and academic libraries. 



SECURITIES AND PERSONAL WORD

by Don Webb

art: Val Lindahn



What is there about Austin TX that is productive of SF talent? Don Webb is one of a number of fantasists residing there; Ken Keller claims it's something about the public water supply. Not maybe about the earth or air?

This is the author's first story for Amazing®. Of his other work, three stories have found a market in Norway. . . .

It was a rushing movement, simultaneously in all directions, or perhaps some hyperspatial direction; Mr. Carey was never sure. It stopped suddenly, and morning light from a small cobblestoned square poured in. As usual, some of the items from the green case fell. Carey hurried over, grabbing the cherrywood stool in one hand. He picked up the ceremonial Maori whalebone club, a valuable antique in most places, and made the long stretch to the top shelf. A small cold pain touched his right shoulder blade. *You're getting old, Carey.*

A rickshaw passed by the front windows.

The city, wherever it was, was getting ready for business. Carey stepped off the stool and returned it to its place. He arranged his hair in the dim mirror and took the small blue cornflower from the cash drawer and fixed it in his lapel.

The drawer was full of heavy cast-bronze coins with square holes in their centers. He wished for a coin-collecting book so he could guess the period. With guided fingers he sorted them into little piles. Carey didn't like to watch his hands when they worked.

In the back room, the automatic coffeepot/alarm gurgled its beginning. The back room had electric lighting — or, Carey reflected, at least the illusion of it. The front was lit only by the street. When the weather was dark, Carey would find kerosene lanterns on the main counter to light. Once it had been candles.

Carey went back for coffee. Coffee scared him too. Or rather his coffee cup did — clear thick glass in the form of a globe with a handle. Lines of latitude and longitude, clear continental masses, the cup's rim corresponding to the Arctic Circle. It had been a promotional item from a coffee company years before. Carey had clipped the coupons and sent off for it. Always pleased by its shape and solidity, he kept it on the window of his studio in Boston, where it sparkled in the sunlight when not full of the overly strong coffee he drank too much of.

One of his first paintings had been of the cup splashing great prismatic rays of light, an abstract work harkening back to the Rayonism of pre-revolutionary Russian avant-garde. About a month after he began tending the pawnshop the cup showed up one day beside the coffeepot.

The morning's first customer was a wizened Chinese man named Liu Hsieh. His eyes were bleary and his lips and teeth stained saffron. His ribs stuck out. He smoked opium or was an opium-eater.

Liu Hsieh had come to hock an heirloom, a suit of yellow pongee silk. Carey's hands darted into the cash drawer and held up an oval coin — one of the largest and with the least patina. Liu Hsieh shrugged, sighed, and exchanged the silk for the coin and a ticket bearing a Chinese ideogram.

The silk caught the light well, and Carey hung it in the display window. Carey thought it made a pleasing composition with the three zinc balls hanging just outside the windows.

It was about time for the boy. There was always a boy. Except during the long week of Mr. Carey's rebellion when the shop had lodged itself in the glittering black place. Sometimes he tried to question the boy when the boy spoke English or German:

"I bring you breakfast, Mr. Carey. Good Morning, Mr. Carey."

"Good Morning, Boy. Tell me, how long have you been bringing me my breakfast?"

"I bring every morning, Mr. Carey. Why? You give me raise?" Hopeful smile.

"Well maybe if you're a good boy and answer my questions. How long has my shop been here?"

"Shop here every day, Mr. Carey. Seven to seven. Seven days a week. Carey's Pawn and Loan Securities and Personal Word."

"No. I mean what was here before the shop?"

"Gee, Mr. Carey. I don't know; I'll have to ask my grandmother, she's real old."

"Tell me, Boy. Where are we?"

And so on. Until the boy would become frightened and flee. And if the store was in the same place next day, a younger brother or sister would deliver Mr. Carey's breakfast, remaining mute with scared trapped animal eyes.

The door chimes warned Mr. Carey of a customer — no, it was the boy. A bright-eyed, thin, Chinese fourteen-year-old carried a brown earthenware bowl. He set the bowl on the counter, bowed, and then to Carey's amusement reached into the cash drawer and removed one of the smallest coins. The boy smiled, bowed again, and left.

Mr. Carey had expected rice. The bowl had a sticky sweet mixture of grits — a sort of couscous and molasses.

Carey spent the morning dusting and rearranging the musical instruments in the loft. It was warm and sunny there, and he was interrupted only twice: First by an old wise-eyed man who purchased a set of glassware — retorts, flasks, titration tubes, and mortar-and-pestle — for twenty silver coins. Second by a very pregnant, distraught woman who obtained a loan by personal word (or at least Carey assumed so — he spoke no Chinese, only smiled, nodded sagely, and handed her some coins).

He liked the loft. It was full of horns and violins and even a case of ocarinas. It had accordions, cymbals, gongs, and vases and boxes full of sheet music. Although he didn't play or even read music, all the bright shiny surfaces and shapes of the piled instruments gave him great security. He would force his hands to overpay those who brought such items in for hock. It was a very minor rebellion against the shop, and he was seldom punished for it. Judging by the patterns of cleanliness and display, his predecessor had had a similar passion for swords, sabers, guns, and instruments of war.

* * *

His predecessor had been an arthritic mulatto. The store was called Maxted's Pawn and Loan then. One and a half storeys on a backwater street in Boston, it struggled with its neighbors for being the most colorless, unobtrusive hulk. Carey had pawned three of his paintings over a month's time and shared tea and brandy with the old man, drinking from chipped, pre-WWII Nipponese-ware teacups.

On Carey's last visit to the old man, Mr. Maxted had slumped over in his chair, spilling tea and brandy all over his pants legs. Carey looked first for a phone and, finding none, rushed to the door. And flung it open. On nothingness — a glittery gray-dark that wasn't really there at all. The shop stayed in the nowhere for three subjective days. Carey pulled some of the floor boards up and stuffed Maxted's body in the hole on the second day.

The fourth day the shop showed up near the American ghetto in Teheran sometime in the late 1960s. A loud, drunk American had hocked his golf clubs — listened to Carey's story and muttered something about waiting 'til it came out as a movie.

Lunch was beef in a ginger-root sauce served over a pancake-looking food. In the early afternoons Carey would set his easel up in the back room, hoping for a few undisturbed hours.

"I say, is anyone here?"

Loud pure feminine voice rang from the front, and in English! Carey hurried out, still in a paint-smeared smock. A lovely, auburn-haired young woman in a dark Victorian dress and parasol appraised him with hopeful eyes.

"Do you speak English? I noticed your sign was in English."

Carey swallowed hard before speaking, painfully aware of his bedraggled appearance. "Yes, ma'am. Can I help you?"

"I assure you, just hearing an English voice is balm to my ears after listening to hours of the singsong of Father's students."

"You'd be a teacher then, ma'am?"

"Well a missionary, actually Father is. I'm sort of — well a maid, a little bit of England in the house."

"Can I get you anything? A cup of tea perhaps?"

"That would be excellent. I came into town for some shopping and have become quite fatigued."

Carey longed to ask what town or when but, discretion being the better part of the cliché, went to make tea.

Mary Denning spent the whole afternoon sipping tea and telling Carey little anecdotes from the mission school. Carey, on the other hand, was vague about his life, but did show her a recent canvas. It was a Rayonist masterpiece — at least Carey thought so — called *The Fourth*. Sharp bright lines of fireworks intersected in a matte-black sky with swirling reflections on a shiny black lake below. Miss Denning seemed very impressed and com-

mented on the striking originality of his work. Of course she would, realized Carey: she's from the 1880s or '90s while for me this is a nostalgia piece.

Mary Denning finally excused herself but promised to return tomorrow. She was scarcely out the door when the shop lurched elsewhere. Carey knew it would; he'd felt a familiar tingling in his mid-section hours before. He'd hoped that Mary'd be caught up in it.

Still, it had been his brightest day for some time; and he shouted out a "Thank-You" to the racks of hocked goods.

In the months that followed Carey's step was lighter, more energetic. The aging pawnbroker often had a smile, which cheered his customers no end. They assumed that his apparent good mood would reward them with more generous loans or with lesser prices on the collected hoard, not realizing that the prices were determined by another authority.

Indeed Carey paid particular attention to that authority. Having long abandoned any belief in randomness or free will — frankly a logical conclusion considering Carey's life — he assumed the shop had rewarded his good behavior with Miss Denning's visit. And, perhaps, would reward him similarly in the future.

One morning as the shop moved backward in time — Carey watched the TV sets on the front aisle reform themselves as magic-lantern machines — Carey developed his Theory of the Pawnshop. He'd read a few years ago a speculation by physicist Jack Sarfatti that the entire universe is based on a single electron dancing backward and forward through spacetime, taking on all the rôles like a character actor in a small troupe. It could be the same for the pawnshop. One shop hurtling through the continuum of the poor, the desperate, and the bargain-hunter. For an observer outside, one shop would remain in place for many years. If it was a careful observer, he or she might note the owner/manager changed from time to time. But from the inside of the shop it was the outer world which changed, keeping only certain coordinates with which it could fit in with reality: the hours of business, the boy, the coin of the realm.

It was that same morning, after a disgusting English breakfast with kippers and all, that Mary Denning re-entered the shop. It was an older Mary with rouged cheeks and a worldly look about her. Three, maybe five years had passed for her. She stared at Carey for a full minute before recognition dawned, "I say, you're Mr. Carey from China, aren't you?"

"Yes, that's right, and you're Miss Denning who has a fondness for properly brewed tea. How may I be of service to you?"

"I'm in the process of redecorating Father's house and was looking for a set of Dresden."

Mr. Carey knew the porcelain stock of the shop's present incarnation was woefully short. However, he could promise a set of Dresden. He said, "I'm afraid no one's hocked their china lately, but I've a friend in Brighton who deals in imported porcelain. If you could sketch out a couple of your favorite

patterns while I make the tea, I could have them here next week.”

A week was a safe lie. The shop had never been in place for a week. Carey handed her a sketch pad after removing its top sheet — a drawing of Miss Denning as a Rayonist goddess. Isis. Infinite Stars Infinite Space. He went to the anachronistically-lit back room and busied himself with oolong and water and cream.

The next few hours were spent in warm conversation on her plans for the manse. Miss Denning bought a large brass Moroccan birdcage for one and six and left, promising to return for the Dresden next Tuesday.

When the boy came with dinner, Carey sent him off again with two guineas and a list of paints, canvas, and brushes. In the somewhat unsatisfactory light of his back room Carey worked long into the night on his *Isis*.

Two canvases, seven subjective months, and thirty-four shop shifts later, *Isis* was finished. A weightless Mary Denning with flesh of stars floated on a background of hieroglyphic silence. Carey hung *Isis* behind the main counter.

Carey was frightened the next morning; swastika bunting hung from the shop's awning. Nazi Germany was unexplored territory for the shop.

The boy brought an excellent *stollen* cake and a bit of sausage for breakfast. Carey asked the boy in faulty college German *where* the shop was.

No. 37 Rossenstrasse. Dresden.

The boy left hurriedly, disturbed by his master's eccentricity.

When noon came another boy, possibly the brother of the first, came with some *schnitzel*. Carey handed him all of the Reichsmarks from the register and Miss Denning's china sketches.

The boy returned with the china by tea time. Carey had had to turn away all his customers due to lack of funds. The shop was displeased.

It moved into the glittering nothingness for four subjective days. Carey became too weak to stand from thirst.

The cash register refilled itself with rubles. The cycle began again. Carey moved the china to the back room. As an afterthought he hung his *Isis* there as well.

Two years later the shop materialized on Soho. From the fashions Carey decided it was during the later part of Victoria's reign.

Carey's first customer was Miss Denning.

Miss Denning said, “Why, Mr. Carey, I missed you yesterday. I guess I'm not used to London. I had my cab drive up and down Soho looking for your shop. I hope you've found the Dresden.”

As Carey opened his mouth something exploded in his chest. He fought to keep his face straight, his pronunciation correct. “Yes. I. Have. It's. In. The. Back. Won't. You. Go. And. Look. While. I. Mind. The. Counter.”

Miss Denning made for the back room; Carey paused, then headed for the door. The invisible barrier which had stretched across the doorway for ten

years was gone. Carey tried to speak, to call out to Miss Denning. The pain in his chest was too severe. He could hear her admiring his painting. His masterpiece.

He stumbled to the street and fell. Before his eyes closed he saw the shop disappear.



THE SINCERE SYMBIOTE

In times of stress and great duress
Each nagging new neurosis
Inclines my mind to hide behind
The thought of symbiosis.
I would call it no legacy
Of shame for my descendants
If my life were exemplified
By full interdependence.
Consider well the dik-dik bird
Who perches on the rhino.
Is he unhappy with his lot,
My colleagues? Damned if I know!
The moss that travels pick-a-back
Upon the torpid sloth,
The pilot fish who cleans the shark,
Are both exceeding loth
To rock a boat that's well afloat —
No barnacle clings closer —
And am I one to scorn the lesson
Nature teaches? No sir!
That host is best who's also guest;
Full reciprocity
Is good enough for clown-fish,
Sea-anemones, and me.
So woo me not with lovers' words
Explicitly erotic.
God knows, the throes of all I feel
Are strictly symbiotic.

— Esther M. Friesner

THE TYRANT THAT I SERVE

by Rebecca Brown Ore

art: George Barr





The author's first SF story sale, "Projectile Weapons & Wild Alien Water" was in our May issue; here is her second. The change in byline is to distinguish her from several other Rebecca Browns.

A remark by Carol Deppe (in a continuing correspondence) was the seed of this story.

Oh, Shelley, don't, my mind squeals before I . . . Shelley, my sweet human mistress, switches on the kill-machine in my brain. Five times in eight days, I come up from the basement and begin hunting her through the walnut-paneled halls, down the chrome-railed lesser staircases, now across the atrium, my useless wings quivering, small bare feet, more human than the dog's they made me of, cold on the marble.

I claw at the buzz in my skull, but keep going, hands twitching, nose sniffing. I want this electric worm out of my brain — I don't hate Shelley. But I must try to kill her, and I hunt; and she runs, shrieks, giggles.

Each hunt comes back like a dream — a distorted house floats by, my foolish silk clothes flutter as I run, then I drop, creep toward the twittering giggle. Then Shelley sees me and runs, shrieking.

I'm slower than she. Natural selection gives predators some advantage — speed, stealth — but, of course, I'm no *natural* predator. My two wings clap together as I race after her. On her belt, she has a small box, in the belt an antenna.

In my brain the receiver.

Chimera, fairy monster with useless wings, I came out of a crystal jar, the design of a young, rich girl who was seven when she ordered me, fourteen when she took delivery.

Humans must love to be terrified. Shelley hums, lures me to the huge main staircase with balustrades turned from oak logs; the matching ceiling drips wooden stalactites.

The lights go out. Caught on the stairs, impelled to chase her, I'm terrified of falling; and terror doesn't please me the way it does humans.

Shelley, please, don't turn up the rheostat.

I want even more to kill, beat the box before it cuts the brain-body connects at the last minute. Kill her so I can get some rest. Once she was gone for two weeks afterward, re-growing body parts. I didn't remember what I did to her.

So important to kill her, my brain hums, as I feel my way down the stairs with my toes, trembling in the dark.

When I reach the floor carpets, I sigh — no hideous wing-breaking tumble tonight. She's hidden in the draperies — I hear them rustle, then keen up my hearing, put my hands behind my small pointed ears. She breathes

there, scared now.

Brain says, *run, kill*. She's powered up the signal. *Blood, oh, blood would taste good*. But in the dark, I can play off against the brain stimulation, so I go slowly, feeling ahead of me with blind probing fingers which touch open-pored wood, the big oak refectory table.

She'd had it moved; if I'd rushed her, I'd have broken ribs. Quietly, I pad around it, going hand over hand. I smell wood, dust, Shelley, hear her breathing, *getting faster with the lungs now, hey, Shelley? Blood for my mouth, oh, blood*. My eyes have adapted for the dark; I see the lump in the drapes.

She switches the lights back on. Blinded, I rush her, grabbing her shoulder before I tumble, in a rage of pleasure. I try to squeeze the wings to my back as I go down.

Then blackness.

I woke up belly down on my kennel bed, fingers a bit sore, blood under the nails — maybe I killed her this time and we can take a break for a few weeks while she grows a new throat? They'd dumped me down in my hunting silks, not bothering to change me. I heard lion footpads, the click of hooves, and saw Hippogriff coming with a coffee cup for me.

Sleep, back to sleep to take me away from all this; but Hippogriff put the cup down and butted me with his beaked head, nudging me up, then checking with the little hands that grew from his chest, seeing if I'd been hurt.

"Hippogriff," I croaked. He maneuvered his bulk around in the small room, got the cup back in his hands without spilling it, and came up to me. As I sat up, I took the cup from him. "She dead? Badly hurt?"

The big head shook, *no*. I put my hand on his shoulder and pulled myself up, then checked in my little mirror for bruises. Not too bad, considering that I'd clipped her. Humans consider me beautiful and rave about my high cheekbones, expressive green eyes (I'm glad I've never seen them when I was hunting), and the chiselled nostrils. Myself, I think humans look coarse. So, to my own eyes, I looked normal, but dark under the eyes, a bruise on one cheekbone, jaw scraped as though I'd been dragged along the carpet.

Piss on her. I loved her. Why?

Hippogriff also brought me breakfast, awkwardly holding the tray. I took it from him before it tipped, and I gobbled down the breakfast — cold, already.

After I ate, I showered to work the stress-kinks out of my legs, arms, and wings. The feathers needed dressing, but Shelley liked to do that herself the morning after. One primary dangled, shaft broken almost in two — either I'd fallen on it when she brain-blasted me, or someone was careless when she, he, or it put me to bed. Or dragged me to it.

Hildegard, the human maid with the big stunner tube for Hippogriff and

the little one for me on her hips, came to complain about the hot water, my dawdling. "Breakfast, late," she snapped, certain that I only really understood a few words and those only as signals.

"Okay," I said, jerking on my pants, leaving chest and wings bare, slipping my feet into shoes; then, wings aquiver, I ran upstairs to serve Paul and Shelley breakfast.

"Ah, Ariban," Paul, Shelley's brother, said, "have a rough night?" Shelley didn't look at me. I noticed her stiff shoulder and the little electric healer wires curled around her neck. As I served her eggs, she cringed back, and I wanted to throw myself at her feet, beg like a dog for her forgiveness. If I had DNA for the tail, I'd wag it low, head down . . . *Shelley, oh Shelley, why can't we just be friends?* I missed the tail to wag.

"Maybe I should put a delay circuit in the box, so he could kill you," Paul said to Shelley. "Then you'd have a few weeks to get the adrenaline out of your system."

My feathers rustled — fairy wings quiver at the least agitation.

"You disapprove of everything I do, Paul," Shelley said. "Quit putting pressure on me."

Paul looked back at me, and I shrugged my wings, hands full of the coffee tray.

Then speaking softly, as though I wouldn't hear if she whispered, Shelley said, "I want to take Ari on the roller coaster today. To show him how thrilling fear is."

"You use the chimera too much," Paul said. "But I've told you that. At least wait for him to calm down. After all, he tried to kill you last night."

"Not by my choice," I said, pouring coffee for Shelley, wanting to touch her.

"We know, Ariban," Paul said, "but . . ." He signalled to me to hurry, then said to Shelley, "And I heard that you taught him to read, too. Shelley, get out more among people, real people."

My wings flicked again and I drew them up against my back, tightly. Paul gave one little tug as I poured coffee for him.

"Yes," Shelley said, "I'll take him on the roller coaster. A creature who gives scare thrills might be even more exquisite in his horror if he's experienced the Mighty Screaming Rails."

"Someone broke one of my feathers last night, Shelley."

"Oh, poor Ariban, Shelley will fix."

After I took the dirty dishes to Hildegard, I met Shelley in the garden. She had the imping knife ready and the little irons to put inside the feather shafts, but she drew back slightly when she saw me, coming at her. The cerebral cortex, the most human brain part, knew the hunt was over; but the ape-animal still feared me. Each morning after, she made herself re-dominate me.

I felt ashamed and dropped my wings and face, as she took my elbow and

sat me down between her feet. "Oh, Shelley," I said, feeling lost, as she stretched out each wing.

"You hate the compulsions, don't you? You remember more than you're supposed to."

"Yes," I said, feeling her tug at the damaged feather, then hold it steady, cutting the vane away just above the kink. While she trimmed the shaft and fitted it with an imping needle, I twisted to the side and flexed both wings several times, fanning us, working them before the one being impeded was immobilized. She didn't look up.

"Ari," she said, holding the feather up with a drop of glue on the iron barb. Turning my back to her again, I relaxed the wing as she fitted the feather back in — shorter, but not by much, stronger with the tiny iron pin inside. She held the feather between her thumb and index finger and the wing with her other hand until the glue set.

"I wish it could be more of this," I said, pleased with her touch, "and less of that."

"I get bored. If I didn't work you, you'd get bored, too."

"I'd kill myself if it was all the other," I said.

"Perhaps I should send you back to the vet's for a suicide-inhibitor. Have them erase your reading skills, too."

I didn't say more, but lay down on my belly and spread my wings. "You little freak dog," Shelley said, as she knelt over me, rubbing the complex knot of muscles around my arm-wing joints. Defenseless on my belly, I quivered, wings rustling the grass.

She loved that and sat more of her weight down on my back — carefully, because she's heavier than I am and all my muscles don't protect the spine. Tiny me, as small as could be made and yet still be dangerous — five feet of muscles, dragged down by those useless wings. Made male, to have as much muscle as possible on the frame, but sterile, like all chimeras.

I tried to pull my wings in, but she held them spread out — not much muscle there. "If I had a quilt," I said, "I could lie on my back without messing the feathers up, get warmer."

"Oh, Ariban, are you chilly?" She let one wing go and tickled under the other.

"Yes, I'm a bit cold," I answered cautiously.

"Since we're going to the roller coaster, I'll have to give you one of Daddy's coats, to hide your wings. Don't want to offend the Muslims out there with an infidel dog."

Wing-binding. Sweet. A subtle torture, although I never complain. "Be careful," I said. She knew — the ape was pleased to see my fairy face wince.

"I love," she said, "to be scared."

"I know," I replied.

My wings — just cut them off, I thought as Hildegard bound them down

with stretchy knitted bands, carefully, so as not to permanently damage them. With them trapped down like that, I felt off-balance as I put on the human coat, fat monster fairy with a bruised cheek, scraped jaw, not completely hunchbacked.

Hildegarde patted me nervously. Impulsively, I hugged her around her middle. I'd never been out much, in daylight, outside the grounds, other than trips to the vet's for tanking — re-programming in an iso-tank, watching kill holograms.

Hildegarde's hand dropped on the stunner. In five years, I'd never threatened her, but ordinary humans didn't like chimeras. I suspected from video holograms that they didn't like rich humans either, despite preserving the rich like national parks. And Paul paid Hildegarde.

Shelley called for me, and Hildegarde pushed me away from her, saying, "Ariban, don't touch. Go. Go to Shelley now."

"I want to say good-bye to Hippogriff," I called up to Shelley, nervous about that great outside of humans.

"Ari."

"Please, a minute."

Hippogriff was loose in the servants' hall when I went up and grabbed his chest hands. "Hipp, I'm going to a human amusement park. Out, you know."

He understood English — but oddly — and pushed me, trying to block me, keep me with him; but Hildegarde pulled out the big stunner, and Hippogriff let me pass. Shelley dropped the bars to keep Hippogriff from following me, while opening the smaller basement door. He flicked his hands at me in the strange sign-language that only he and Paul knew.

Without any more words, we met her two bodyguards at the cars and got in an armored roadster that looked like an ordinary BMW from the outside. As we passed the gate, I turned around to look again at the outside of the house, so plain, like a block of ordinary buildings. None of the inside ornateness showed — *we don't share the visuals*, Shelley said once.

I wondered if she taped my wings down to spoil my appearance, to hide the visuals. Trying to get comfortable, I twisted around until I could lean on my side, not against the taped-down wing bones. Shelley smiled as I turned — humans are amused by strange things. I smiled back, not baring my teeth, as we drove through the city, then toward a strange cleared ground, partly covered with cars, the rest covered with whirling girder contraptions — the amusement park.

As though I was a child, or her dwarf lover, Shelley held my hand as the bodyguards paid for the tickets. Humans, masses of them, swarmed around us, hopped on rides gaudy with lights and metal, enamel; and screamed, screamed as though chimera hunted them as the rides twisted on their metal joints. Shelley tugged me through the mob toward one huge thing that looked like a train track skewed across and through an unfinished building

— girders in the air, immobile.

I trembled as though I'd done something wrong, imagined all the humans staring at me. "Exciting, isn't it?" Shelley said. "I'm out among people, like Paul wanted."

"No," I managed to answer, my tongue pulling free finally in my sticky mouth. I tried to relax — my wing muscles spasmed under the knitted bands. "Shelley, ride it by yourself."

"But we're doing it to show you how much fun it is. Your birthday, remember?"

Birthday? We didn't have birthdays, not chimeras. Purchase anniversary if you were a common chimera, stock. Delivery anniversary if custom. My wings ached. I thought, *let's get this over with. To Hell with it and me.* I followed her through the turnstile and into the little car at the front of the small train. Seatbelts, lap bars. Shelley sat beside me and the two guards slid in behind.

Some God Militant, scourge of recombinant mock-men, tried to toss us into his blue sky. I screamed, pleading that I'd not ordered myself made. *Not me, I wasn't responsible.* Shelley screamed, too, raising her arms as if to be snatched from the car, like a God Militant worshiper, praying for the rupture, the great up-snatching to heaven of all real human beings.

Then the utter horror — upside down. Falling . . .

When I woke up, I found myself thrashing on a bench, pants wet, clotted with dung. A bodyguard peeled my fingers off Shelley's arm.

"I heard chimeras couldn't take it," Shelley said, "but I thought *you* were different."

"Unbind his wings," a man said from the crowd. I looked up at him and saw, beside the human who spoke, another delicate face, real like mine, not smeared and coarse like a human's. A free chimera? Only the Buddhists freed chimeras. The two came up and pulled the heavy coat off me while I sobbed.

"Get a blanket," one said.

I muttered about God Militant and true language, unreality, then slid more firmly into my body, and said, "Bathroom." The two from the crowd carried me into a men's room, where Shelley wasn't supposed to follow. One of her bodyguards came in, though, and jammed the door closed between us and the crowd.

While the human gently freed my wings, cutting the bands, I vomited into a toilet. The other chimera, a de-winged stock fairy, ran a basin full of hot water. I managed to pull myself up and went over to the basin, stripped. They washed me with paper towels, dried me, held me upright.

"Not all humans see chimeras as unreal," the human said. "Some think we all share a transcendental nature."

Buddhists, I realized, somewhat shocked — Zenbos were the bad guys on the video — but not surprised when he taped a small envelope under my

armpit on the side opposite the bodyguard. "He needs a blanket — we have them in our car," the human told Shelley's bodyguard, handing him a parking stub and a key. As the bodyguard went out with their key, Shelley came in, her arm bleeding where my fingers had dug in. The human and chimera looked annoyed. I couldn't stop trembling, thinking of all the hostile humans who'd pounce when we opened the door, when we went out. Somehow the other chimera slipped out and brought back a first aid kit, coming back when the bodyguard did. The bodyguard gave the chimera the blanket.

The chimera whispered in my ear. "There's always a refuge, if you're willing to work for it. Mind." He wrapped the blanket around me.

"I'm surprised," the human said to Shelley, "that the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals doesn't crack down on you chimera owners for scaring your pets here."

The other chimera pulled one of my arms free and injected it with a drug that left me conscious, but unconcerned, limp. I smiled at him — Zenbos. The Buddhists say everything, even a test-tube dog that looks human, is holy. He patted my shoulder, then looked up at the human, who came over and lifted me carefully.

"We'll carry him to your car," he told Shelley.

"Thank you so much, really. I didn't expect him to react this way." She opened her purse and the two guys took money as though giving first aid to terrified chimeras was their job. I felt a bit odd about that, with their envelope taped to my body, hypnotic Zenbo propaganda probably, full of subtle lies; but nothing mattered too much.

The drug wore out while I slept, and I began having nightmares: DNA, great chimera helixes I had to climb, while Shelley laughed from the top. A base rung broke and I tumbled. My scream . . . I tried to sit up, but lay paralyzed, half-awake, half-asleep.

Paul sat by my kennel bed. I finally floundered up, staring at him, wondering if I'd slept beyond breakfast.

"Breakfast?" I croaked, sounding as dumb as Hildegard thought I was.

"Don't worry about breakfast yet. It's just a little beyond midnight. Buddhists taped this to you," he said, handing me the envelope. "Shelley's being such a bitch, perhaps going to a refuge would be a good idea for you."

"Why do you give this to me?" My hands trembled as I opened the envelope — already unsealed. On the paper were nine phone button diagrams, the push dial nine times, with a graphic finger pressing different buttons on each diagram, and underneath, an arrow going from left to right — illiterates could dial the phone number, if they understood that the arrow pointed the number direction. And a Buddha and lotus in the corner — I'd seen them on fiction videos, those tricky Buddhists, sophisticals, stealing pets.

Hippogriff shambled up and lay down so he could put his big head against

Paul's hip, and crooned, looking up at Paul, who scratched him idly around the feathered earholes. "Oh, Hippogriff," Paul said, "has little Ariban been happy lately, with his Sennatrix DNA-coil-segment brain?"

Hipp moved so Paul could see his hands and signalled. "He said," Paul relayed to me, "that once you asked how you could really make her stay dead."

"Sir?" I began to be frightened again.

"Shelley's got to grow up. And if you don't get her, she's going to get you." He spoke softly, "Terror's a life spice to humans, but . . ."

I sat up. "How can I get away, with these? What do the Buddhists really do with chimeras." I jerked my wings.

"Poor Ariban, too intelligent for any situation," Paul said. He leaned back and lit a cigarette. "Shall I tell her you want to make her dead?" Hippogriff settled his bulk back down on the floor, also looking at me. "Call the refuge number," Paul said. "It has to be an act of your own free will, if I understand the matter correctly. They don't want aged pets dumped on them."

"Sir?" He was trying to get rid of me. I felt terribly tired, and slumped down on my side, wings behind, head propped up on an elbow.

"So suspicious," he said. "You're too intelligent for this."

"It's the only real home I've had. I love Shelley, if only she wouldn't . . ."

He interrupted me. "That roller coaster, I suppose, was lovely."

I quivered — the drug had completely worn out of my system — angry gods, terror. "No," I said. He sat down on the bed, rolled me to my belly, and rubbed between my wings, around the roots of them, and down my back.

"If you didn't have wings," he said, "you'd look like a lovely sulky boy, with those eyes."

I closed them. "Don't tell Shelley."

"Better dream about Buddhist monasteries."

In the morning, I served breakfast despite hunts, roller coasters, and strange Buddhist drugs. As I cooked omelettes beside the table and heated the plates, Paul told Shelley he'd take me to the vet's to have me tank-tested, in case the scare had blown my conditioning.

What free-will does a creature with a brain worm have? Yet the Buddhist had been kind, and Paul wanted me to go. After breakfast, Shelley dressed me in a soft wool sweater with wing holes, gently working each wing through. My feathers were a bit ragged; but if I was going to be tanked, she'd dress them after I finished thrashing out imaginary murders in that dark warm brine.

The Buddhists would not have me tanked, I thought, at least not that way. Paul was going to set me free. Free? I kissed Shelley, held her.

"Oh, Ariban, you can't love me too much," she said. "I suspect you do need re-tanking."

Paul draped my wings with a loose overcoat and we got in his armored Jaguar. He drove us himself, without bodyguards. I looked out the windows; raining out there, streaks of water obscuring the view. I felt sleepy and didn't really want to go through with this. *If only Shelley would stop keying me up . . .*

"If you don't go, I'll really have you tanked." Paul took my chin in his hand, turned me to face him. "And if you hurt Shelley badly, there's a lethal needle for you." We stopped near a phone booth.

I walked through the rain with the number chart in my hand, feathers bruised by the wet overcoat, the wings writhing. *This is wrong*, I thought, but I remembered the roller coaster — the Buddhist man and the chimera knew pets didn't like those things, so Shelley must have known, too. *Okay*, I thought, opening the paper and pushing the numbers, first number, second number, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth.

"Dharma Refuge," a voice said.

"I would like refuge," I said, suddenly feeling utterly lost. I looked back at the car, but Paul had opaqued the windows.

"Have you committed a crime, done anything that if you were human would be considered a crime? Have you taken more than the clothes on your back?"

"I'm a terror chimera, but I'm compelled to do that." *Maybe they'd turn me down because of that*. Rejected by a Dharma Refuge — I could go home — I couldn't figure out if the idea scared me or pleased me. I looked back at Paul's car, but the windows were still opaqued. Lethal needle. I could have been euthanized earlier, when I put Shelley in the recon tank for two weeks.

"Where are you? Are you calling from a pay phone?"

"Yes," I said, wings beating the glass walls of the booth. Cold, so cold and wet.

"Give me the number if you can read, landmarks if you can't. Are they searching for you now?"

"My owner's brother brought me to this booth."

"Are you sure you want to come to us?"

"Lethal needle," I said and began crying. Then I stifled the sobs and managed to say clearly, "Your people helped me when my owner took me on a roller coaster yesterday. She's used me five times in eight days. Humans make me nervous." I looked at the phone and said, "I'm at 43-456-8907, at the corner of 34th and Madeira." I'd betrayed Shelley; my heart twisted inside me as though it had been cut loose.

"Wait. We can't promise to take you in permanently, but we'll give you refuge and make a fuller investigation."

"I'll wait, please." If they had refused me, would Paul have let me back in the car? Refuge or re-tanking, nasty lying in dark salt water. I remembered too much of the last time, when I played through murder after murder, brain-slammed, holograms of a dead Shelley floating in the dark. But I was

cold in the glass phone booth, exposed — please, Paul, let me crawl back into the car. I thought about killing Shelley, the lethal needle. I shivered, then pulled the coat back over my wings. Wet coat, no help.

A cab finally pulled up, but stopped twenty feet back when the driver saw Paul's car. Paul drove off then, and two uniformed monks, saffron robes and tiny patchwork aprons, climbed out of the cab and came up to the booth.

"Do you seek refuge in the Dharma?"

"Yes," I said. Neither monk had helped me yesterday, but I was anxious to be out of the phone booth, to be among anything made of DNA, to be warm — physically, socially.

"Do you know your owner's address or have a tag?"

"Shelley Carteret, the address is . . ."

"Oh boy," one said to the other. Each took one of my arms and hurried me to the cab, stripped the wet clothes off, and gave me a couple of towels and string pants, hot tea from a thermos, as the cab took off.

As I shivered faintly, one asked, "Do you know much about how the Carterets are outside their house?"

"She only allowed fiction programs and channels on our videos," I replied. "Shelley let me see some God Militant shows, though."

"I saw you at a beach party on the news once," one of the monks said, "before I went to the Refuge myself. You looked more decorative then."

"Oh," I said, curling a towel around my back, threading it between my wings. "They've never shown the hunt, have they?"

"When you . . . no."

I blew stale air out of my lungs and sipped the tea as we rode through the wet streets in an anonymous fake cab with Shelley Carteret's escaped chimera in it — Sennatrix brain in tightening coils.

The Zenbo refuge was another rich house, older than the Carterets', that some rich human must have left to the Buddhists. We pulled up to the gate, entered only to come to a wall, a 90-degree turn, and then through the last gate that led to the car elevator platform. The cab sank down to the parking garage, and the driver stopped in a row of about fifteen fake cabs. My rescuers motioned me toward another elevator cage which took us back to ground level. We walked under a covered pathway.

"We can take you to see the Roshi, soon," one said. I kept looking through the rain at the tiny trees, expanses of gravel studded with lichen-crusting rock — my eyes running through a system of plants that made space expand and contract. Illusions. Like holos.

"Like Alice in Wonderland," I said out loud.

"What? Your owner read you that?"

"I can read." I remembered learning and began crying, *oh, Shelley. This is so nice*, I'd told her when I first understood what she was trying to teach me.

"Normal to have some regrets, but you mentioned something about a

lethal needle?"

"When you see the Roshi," the other said, "kneel, then *listen* to him. Leave when he rings the bell."

The landscape expanded and contracted around me.

We took off our shoes as we entered a low wooden building, and walked on straw mats, past men and chimeras who barely glanced at me. My escorts bowed me into the presence of the Roshi.

Just another human American — somehow, I'd almost expected an Oriental chimera, dragon, dog-lion, or at least a Japanese human with almost chimerical eyes. I knelt, bowed, and waited for him to speak.

"A terror chimera?" he said softly, smiling.

"Yes," I said, barely audible.

"We think if matter is complicated enough, it reflects mind — that all form is Mind. So we don't say that creatures from genetic mix-masters are less capable of transcendence than we whose parents complicated our DNA sexually. But we don't grant you equality with humans as you conceive us. We allow equality for all — rats, trees, chimeras, humans, mosquitoes that bite us all."

"I had a nightmare about DNA," I said, then remembered that I wasn't supposed to speak. He smiled at my confusion and embarrassment; and I smiled, nervously back, and raised my head.

"Don't smile too much, young angel creature; or you'll get raped." He sighed and looked beyond my head, eyes not focused on anything in particular. "If you want, we can amputate your wings. And whether you want or not, we may have to restructure your bone-muscle attachments so you're human-average in strength. The man with the cane is the Monjutor — he teaches you how to sit."

He rang a metal hand bell — I was dismissed. I scooted backwards on my hands and knees, remembering that one backs away from kings.

He laughed. "You're no longer a dog," he said.

My guides reappeared and showed me how to leave properly — quick standing bow, then go.

The bathroom was strange — showers or spray tubes to wash off with, then a couple of big cypress tubs to sit in, only for clean guys, human or chimera. My new escort, a human female, showed me where to put my clothes, handed me a towel, and stripped herself, breasts no odder than much of what was hung on chimeras.

"Are they functional?" she asked, staring at my groin.

"I'm sterile," I said, towel flipped off my shoulder, poised low.

She turned red from the buttock up. "Sorry. That wasn't . . . You have to get used to this place."

"I don't know what the trigger stimulus would be. I was a terror chimera," I said stiffly before I hopped in the coolest tub. We floated around

each other. She sank down to her chin and watched me.

"You aren't the first terror chimera I've been in this tub with," she said. "Come on, relax. We'll have to get out soon enough."

"I'm scared of you," I finally admitted.

When we got out, she handed me a drier, some lengths of white cloth, another pair of string pants, and zoris with socks for them, with separate pockets for big toes.

"You'll hate the food," she said. "Most new carnivore-based chimeras do." Then she told me how to wear the length of cloth, threaded around between my wings and arms, before she dressed herself in an orange robe and took me down another hall.

"Since we don't have a clean-room class beginning right away," she said, "we're putting you on a non-clean line, just fitting hardware into cases — disc players this time."

"You don't make black boxes for chimera here?" Electronic things scared me — human business, control business.

"Of course not." A door swung open and I saw an assembly row — conveyor belts loaded with beige plastic shells and black stacks of wafer assemblies, speakers. The conveyors hissed softly on their rollers; otherwise the room was almost silent. The woman sat me down between a human male and another chimera, a tall, shaggy, six feet of fur that thinned out enough on the face for the eyes to see through. He or she spoke perfectly, though, and told me to fit the assembly pins in the plastic case sockets. The big shaggy flipped two toggles; and the assemblies and plastic cases decended on their conveyors, hissing toward me.

I fitted my first assembly together, fingers trembling. Then the big shaggy slowed down the assembly conveyors and showed me where to put the assembled unit — on a faster conveyor that crossed below. I adjusted my chair so the conveyor that took assemblies away was at waist level.

"You'll do about four hours a day of this," the big shaggy said, speeding up the two conveyor belts that brought me parts, "unless you've got other talents."

"I was a terror chimera," I said, "but I can write, read."

The big shaggy looked down at me and snorted. The human to my left snickered. *Was*, I thought, *I said I was*. *Was*. Hugely relieved, I laughed back at my companions. If I faced nothing more than components coming at me, I could handle the refuge. The human looked at my wings and said carefully, "A lady's terror chimera?"

"Yes," I said, fitting my fourth stack into its shell and dropping it on the lower belt. "I was a lady's terror chimera."

"Any daughter of mine wanted a terror chimera like you, I'd have her psyched. Real problem bitch, I bet."

The Monjutor came and whacked the two on either side of me with a flexible bamboo cane. "Quiet," he said, "this is meditation, too."

Then the Monjutor looked curiously at my back, stick ready to crack, searching for an appropriate place to lay on. The wings draped down to my hipbones, so he finally lightly whacked me across the back of my neck.

"They sent your medical charts," the Refuge's lawyer explained to me, "but Shelley filed a complaint against her brother and the Center the instant we sent the clothes back."

The Roshi sat near us as the lawyer told me Shelley had the right to see me in private after she was searched. I'd have to make a court appearance and swear that I found my rôle in her house morally offensive, that I sought refuge of my own free will. Paul would testify that she'd abused me.

"I had a Sennatrix chimera once," the Roshi said, "before. Like rolling a hundred-faceted die for the brain — some are most unusual. Many gametes to get one custom — they don't worry if the brain is more than needed for the form, the task. We promise to defend you, fellow-creature Ariban. And after you've had some training, we'll give you a tattoo."

"Will I belong to you, then, as I belonged to her?"

"No. It's a warning in case you did go back and were sold. Or if we're attacked and you're stolen. Zen-trained chimeras aren't as . . . reliable . . . predictable . . . as those who've never spent time with us."

"I already feel changed," I said, still nervous.

"Perhaps," he replied, "but your wing tips tremble."

The lawyer rose and said, "Be sure he's prepared for the court appearance. Judge Hickie is presiding — very pro-property rights."

"Keep a table between you and Carteret," the Monjutor told me as I opened the interview room door. Shelley stood inside, dressed formally, with gloves and a veiled hat, tears barely visible, glistening under the black lace.

I've hurt her, I thought, sitting down behind the table, leaning back into my wings to steady them. "Please sit down," I said to her.

"Paul sent you away."

"Yes, but I do hate what you make me do. You abuse me."

"As though you were a dangerous drug," she said, smiling slightly, sitting down finally. "I love you, and here you are, humiliating me, making a spectacle of us both. You shouldn't be ashamed of how I have fun with you — you can't help it."

"Oh, Shelley, why did you take me on the roller coaster?" My voice rose despite myself, questioning her. *Her*. She tossed back her veil to let fresh tears glitter at me, and I lowered my eyes.

"What do you do here?" she finally asked.

"I help make disc players, radios. I do sitting meditations. Work in the greenhouse some. Everyone seems friendly."

"No lovely clothes, just rags wrapped around you, uniformed novice."

She'd stopped crying now, seemed frustrated.

I remembered the first week in her house, scared, fresh out of the tanks, then more horrified and ashamed after she set me hunting her, compulsion sizzling in my mind. When I woke up the next morning, she sat with me while I sobbed, stroking me, down in the kennel. I wasn't fully grown then, but still had almost the strength of a human male; I don't think she realized then that I could kill her if she didn't release the brain slam button in time. For a long time after that first hunt, she didn't use me, taught me to read, played with me.

Now, her hands twitching on the table, she watched me. I started to say, "I'll see you . . ." My voice broke, I struggled to finish, "in . . . court." Then I cried into my hands, trying to hide my tears.

"I'm glad," she said, "that you can cry, too. I've missed you so dreadfully."

"Shelley, go," I said. "Go."

She stepped around the table and stroked between my wings. "Poor Ariban, so neglected these days." I arched my back for her, quivering.

"Time's up, Carteret," the Roshi said, walking into the room. "You've had your shot at him."

"Maybe he wants to go home?" she said, fingers rubbing where I usually itched.

The Roshi turned to me and said, "Ariban, she tried to smuggle this in." He laid my black box on the table.

"She . . . ee," I hissed, wings jerking, skin under the robes suddenly chilly. I turned and saw that her eyes seemed dead, empty. "May I leave, sir; I mean stay at the Center, get out of this room?"

"Carteret, you leave," he said. She put her hand around my neck and shook me slightly before turning to go. As soon as the door closed behind her, I looked back at the Roshi.

The Roshi took out an insulated wire, stripped one end, then the other. "Watch, Ari." He unscrewed a light bulb from a table lamp, then inserted the bare copper wire in beside the right hand button, and pushed the other end of the wire into the socket. "Your box. What I just did generally ruins them."

"Don't test it," I said, sweating, panting slightly.

"If you have mental temptations, use mental resistance. Perhaps chimera should use physical resistance to physical compulsion, electricity against the electric brain worms. You could, of course, simply smash the control boxes. You never tried to find them when she wasn't using them, did you?"

"No. Shelley brought that, today?" I asked again.

"We'll use it as evidence in the hearing." He laid the box aside. "I wonder if you chimera might not think yourselves around these compulsions, even if they are more forceful in your minds than our human desires are in ours."

I wanted to get away from the box. "That, sir, seems impossible."

"Strip down a wire yourself and push it inside the box beside the other button — do what I did."

I, trembling, almost cut the wire in two and was barely able to hold the wire steady enough to fit it down beside the button. Then, when I touched the other end against the copper strip in the light socket, I felt static, sparks frying those things inside the box. Suddenly relieved, I looked up at the Roshi, not so afraid of the box, and bowed to lay the box at his feet.

We grinned at each other; and then he cuffed me, gently.

The food was lousy — vitaminized fat-glob, vegetables, and synthetic protein, with fish bones to keep the carnivores from going absolutely crazy. And pickles.

Informal hearing. While Shelley asked the court not to terminate ownership, the judge sat in his archaic robes, above the electronic field of lenses and terminals, staring at us — the Refuge's lawyers, me, and Paul — the anti-propertyarians, the religious guys.

Behind the rails, the courtroom was full of humans who muttered between the judge's gavel blows. Our lawyers put Paul on the stand, to testify that I'd been abused. He offered to put Hippogriff up as a witness.

"Not a double-bonded chimera, not in my courtroom, Mr. Carteret," the judge said. "It seems you could have considered psychiatric consultation — sneaking your sister's chimera to the monastery seems excessive. Is the property in question capable of speaking?"

Property — I could etch chips, was learning to run a clean room, could read. The Refuge lawyers put their hands on my arms, squeezed gently, and pushed me up. I walked by a swiveling camera, its glass eye fixed on me, and went up before the bench, my wings quivering. A feather fell, drifted toward the floor — I resisted the urge to turn completely around and scoop it up. "Your honor," I said, "I can speak."

"Do you think you have any moral rights? Shelley Carteret designed you, the family paid for you. We do allow religious freedom, but I wonder if the refuge principle doesn't cater too much to sentimentalists. Chimera owe us more than even womb-born meat animals," the judge said, towering over me in black.

"Sir, I hate what she had put in my brain."

"Why? We stop you from killing with a blast to the pleasure center a nano-second before we cut motor control. If you're beaten, we take you away; but this is painless."

"I hate the compulsions. Sir, she tried to bring the black box into the Refuge."

Shelley spoke then, out of order, but the judge didn't hammer at her. "I was angry then," she said. "I love him and want him, but Paul took him away as if I had no rights in the matter." She reached toward me, stepped up

close to me. "Oh, Ariban, I'd thought of making you something more than a terror chimera."

"Shelley," I said, my throat knotted, "I love you enough that hunting you is monstrous."

Our lawyers moved to put the final judgement date off, hoping, I suspected, to get another judge. This judge said, "The court wishes to honor both religious convictions and property rights, and will postpone final judgement if the owner is permitted to visit the chimera."

I rushed back, through the electronic media gear below the bench, camera swiveling with me, and sat down between the Dharma Refuge lawyers, leaning back against my wings, feeling the muscles jerk anyway, against the wood.

The media wanted interviews afterward, but the lawyers claimed monastic privacy and maneuvered me into a Refuge car before I could faint.

"I was tattooed today," I told Shelley when she came to visit, bringing with her a heater flask filled with eucalyptus water and towels.

"Your feathers are filthy," she said, opening the flask, pouring water on a towel. "And they haven't shaved your head yet. Maybe the Roshi likes you better with longer hair."

I loosened my robe and pulled it back, so she could see the blue lotus between my armpit and nipple, puffy flesh around it. She put her hand on it — for a minute, I thought she'd pinch — and said, "Perhaps I should have made you sexually responsive. But if I had, you'd be bedding some Buddhist. Male or female, you think?" She began stroking me, moving me around to get me between her feet.

"Shelley, a man here said if he had a daughter who ordered me as a horror chimera, he'd have her psychéd."

"Well, here I am, being lectured by my chimera," she said as she began grooming my wings. "You are responsible now for making me very unhappy."

"What about Paul?" I asked.

"I can take care of Paul, if you come back."

As she cleaned and massaged, around those knotted muscles and down the wings, I closed my eyes and hummed — getting from her about as much pleasure as I could take. She tickled me and I tickled her back, then she went back to work on my feathers.

"You stayed more than your court-allotted time," the Roshi said.

Shelley tugged me to my feet and said, "I made him beautiful for you, Simon-roshi. Ariban, Simon owned chimeras once, which he used in his own rich way, until all the publicity about his men and chimeras drove him to this monastery."

"I followed a chimera I loved," he said softly. I was shocked, remembering a man who caught me once so close that my extra-strong tendon-levered

bones and muscles couldn't work. Suddenly afraid of both Shelley and the Roshi, afraid of human complexities, I said, "I don't understand human desires, the desire to be scared, to do sex."

Shelley caught me by a wing, then laid her hand on my pectoral muscle and touched her nose to mine, as we'd done when we were both younger. The Roshi groaned slightly.

"If I came back, would you promise never to use me in hunts again?" I asked, begging almost.

"She could promise you everything and do what she wanted," the Roshi said. "Ask her to join you here."

"Look at your Roshi carefully," Shelley said. "He . . ."

"I neither fight my desire nor make an approach," the Roshi said. "Your feelings, ethics, consciousness matter to me. But you have no standing, legal or moral, in her eyes."

"Oh, Shelley . . ." I didn't know how to get her to promise. I could imagine a compulsion only if I could yank it out of my skull, or act it out until my motor control was cut. But she and the Roshi had me spinning inside my skull — I felt most odd.

Mechanical compulsions, I told myself, trapped between them, *were different than ones the brain comes up with for itself*. "But I don't like any compulsions," I told them. "Not any."

For me, the work in the Refuge was wonderful, although many humans complained they could have done as well outside — the hours were only somewhat shorter than state corporation hours. But for me, when I changed filters with linen-gloved fingers, checked the valve doors to the clean room, my wings sprayed and draped to keep them from shedding, I was mastering electronics. When I ran a check on the ambient particulate matter, I thought of my attachment to all the humans and chimeras listening to music on our disc players.

And as I built the components, I realized that to be built of any DNA implied identity with all DNA-made creatures — chemicals had no original identity — no magic vitalism came from the womb, as no thingness came from phage-assisted insertions of DNA chains into repro cells. Chemicals were chemicals as chips were chips.

I tried to explain this to a new human, how wonderful mastery over technology was, as we both dressed after the bath. I was talking, damp after the bath, until the human, who'd only been with us a few days, screamed, "I came to escape that. And you, some high-tech, I never understood why you were too expensive to do dump labor. I couldn't buy brains . . ."

The human hit me, fist to chin. As I went down, he hit me again. I scrambled to the side — *if I hit him, I'll kill him — he doesn't understand*.

"Stop," the Monjutor said, laying the bamboo cane against the man's shoulders, calling for disciplinary monks.

"Too much, out there. In here, too," the man cried, kicking at me again. "I thought the Buddhists wouldn't let a chimera mock a man."

"I can't defend myself physically," I cried as the other humans and chimeras pulled the man back.

"You were showing off, novice," the Monjutor said as he laid the cane across my wings, not in a stroke, just pressing to get my attention. "Can't defend? Why not?"

"I'm very powerful — I could tear . . . t — . . ." I said, pulling my legs into lotus and trying breath-counting to calm myself.

"Then, if you didn't lose control, you could just stop him?" the Monjutor said, whacking at my hands with the cane until I grabbed it. "Like you stopped the cane now."

"Beast," the human cried from where the others held him. "Too expensive to do human, decent work. Pervert."

"We don't escape our culture," the Monjutor said, "we do other things with it." Then he hit me again when I let go of the stick. "Ariban, how powerful for your size are you? Could you lift this man off the ground?"

"Yes."

"Carry him into the Roshi's and explain what's happened?"

"If I had to, I could," I said, grabbing the cane as it came whistling toward my hands again. The new human thrashed his head from side to side.

"You have to."

When I came up to the man, I smelt his terror, felt his body heat, saw the sweat, fear in the eyeballs — old poor man with gray hair about to be assaulted by a chimera — and I ran, screaming. The Roshi and Monjutor found me and brought me into the audience hall.

I sat before them, quivering, sure they'd throw me out immediately for disobedience. "He was too terrified," I said.

"Where," the Roshi asked, "does a mechanical compulsion end and the brain begin? I don't ask to test you — but I wonder if you've let your ideas about that brain worm affect your mind."

"How could it not?" I said, scared still more, seeing the Roshi's eyes, remembering Shelley's and the new man's.

"Ariban, there's more to you than that electric thing in your head, just as there's more to me than who arouses my sexuality."

For at least a week, I had to sit meditating by the man who'd attacked me. And the Monjutor spent hours padding around us in his zori socks. Each time the man's eyes or mine shifted toward the other, *whack, whack*, for both of us. The bamboo stung, clattering against our robes. His and mine. I held my wings up. *Whack. Whack.*

Before we sat down again after the break on the third day, I tried to talk to the man. "I'm sorry, too, that I was born this way."

"Don't try to get me in trouble, you shit," he replied.

Whack. Whack. To both, equally.

We sat, trying terribly hard not to look at each other. I tried not to notice his odor, the catches in his breathing — too much like a hunt.

Afterward, the Monjutor took me aside and said, "Don't try to talk to him. Worry about your reactions, if you must, but let him work on himself. He's been a slave to a machine as much as you have — 15 years of watching one machine's numbers."

A few days later, Shelley came visiting, with feather combs, oils, and the heater flask. She hugged me carefully, arms under the wings, and said she missed me; but her heart wasn't wildly enthusiastic — beating slowly against my chest, breathing also under control. Then she turned me around and looked at my feathers.

"You're not pulling them, are you? They're messed up around the edges."

"No, that's where I hold them up when the Monjutor corrects me."

"They hit you?" she said, cleaning up where my fingers had messed up the feathers. "Ariban, the S.P.C.A. would step in if this wasn't a religious place."

"Do you see any bruises? Really it isn't a hard blow — just to stimulate acupuncture attention-medians."

I felt her fingers press into my back, touch here and there. "Red spots," she said. "Yes, and a bruise, two bruises. Ariban, I don't want to lose you. I've been thinking about ordering you a companion. Female, male, what would you like?"

"Female." Another of me, who'd understand everything. "Would you really make me a companion?"

"Tell me why you're getting hit, Ariban," she said, massaging feather oil into her hands.

"A human's afraid of me, hates me. They make us sit together and whack us if either turns toward the other in the least. It's not easy here," I said. "He was a machine tender, then took refuge here."

"Working people don't understand us," Shelley said, as if we were both the same kind of creature.

"Shelley, he's scared of me. It's almost like a hunt, but I'm not in hunt mode. I hate that, anyway."

The feather comb jerked. I looked back at her and she broke a tiny smile across her stiff face. Before she left, she gave me a cashmere sweater, my old one, knitted with wing holes, full of kennel odors; and she kissed me as though I was a fully human male.

I took the sweater to my dorm and rubbed my face over it. If she'd only promise to destroy all my black boxes and never order another one, cripple the brain worm in my head . . .

Before I fell asleep, I thought, *if it didn't work out, I could always escape again. I'd remember the number.*

Perhaps, I thought, I should go home. Home? So strange that the Refuge, such a quiet, orderly place, could be so intense — so many minds whirling in thought voids, grabbing for quiet. And the Roshi and Monjutor pushing at me, using the terrified, angry human as a stick.

Shelley came again a week later, not asking me to come home with her. All she did was prattle on about Hippogriff, Paul, Hildegard. When she left earlier than usual, I felt as though I'd been visited in prison.

After she left, I went to the factory, showered and put on the clean-room suit, then went in to supervise the machines etching chip-circuits, checking chips on the scanning scope. Proofing tiny circuits, even blown up a thousand times, against a template, got tedious — my eyes began to get blurry.

Whack.

"You bring dust in," I told the Monjutor.

"No," he said, "you left all the doors open." **Whack. Whack.**

Dust had filled the room, hit in by flying gas molecules. I had to re-scrub the room, trash the chips when the screen showed dust grains like boulders in the circuits. Suddenly the work was very tiresome, and I sympathized with the humans who complained about this meditation.

"The main duty of a Buddhist — sweep the garden, any size," the Monjutor said as he helped me de-contaminate the room.

"Maybe I'm not a Buddhist," I said.

The human who hated me tried to beat me up again, in the meditation hall. As he hit me, I uncurled my legs and grabbed him, pulled him down. We both screamed hysterically, locked together, until the Monjutor and others reached us. Finally, I let them peel us apart.

"He tried to kill me," the human kept saying. "The killer monster tried to get me."

"Go get a steel rod from construction," the Monjutor said. A monk scurried off. The human still screamed that I'd tried to kill him, but he became hoarser and hoarser. We finally waited in silence until the monk returned with a reinforcing rod.

The Monjutor tossed it to me. "Bend it."

"No," I said.

Whack. "He has no idea that if you'd wanted to kill him . . . bend it." The cane swished back, poised. I bent the rod. The humans all stared at me; the other chimeras wouldn't look toward me at all.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I didn't ask to be made like this." I didn't know I'd dropped the rod until it clanged on the floor.

"He didn't try to kill you," the Monjutor told the human, "so don't bother him anymore."

When I began to walk, almost blindly, to my dorm, the humans quickly got out of my way.

"His owner disappeared for a couple of weeks two years ago — guess he managed to nail her then," I heard one say.

"Then that's why he's such a wimp, he's afraid of his strength," another replied.

"Change me now," I begged the Roshi. "Cut my wings off — take the strength away."

"We can't yet. You'll have to be more patient with the court."

"Humans say I'm afraid of myself."

"You believe that? You restrained the man who attacked you without hurting him."

"For me, agitation has an unfortunate prior context — and human agitation makes me agitated."

"I think we haven't sent you hunting." He reached for his bell, but stopped. "But we refuse to make a pet out of you either." He rang the bell then.

The Monjutor moved the man away from me in the meditation hall and shortened my sitting times; gave me more work in the clean room, alone, which made me feel isolated, more mind-aroused, and thrown back on my own resources. No one was as kind to me as Shelley then, when she came to visit, with scent vials and luxurious clothes for me that I couldn't use in the monastery. I wondered if she hoped to trap the Roshi in an indiscretion; but when I asked, she said not.

One day, I took her into the garden; and she let me brush her hair and show her how we sat when we meditated, counting our breaths. "You could do that with me," she said. "What's so good about this place that you want to stay now?"

The Roshi walked up to us along the paths between raked gravel and boulders. "Ariban, you meet your guests in the visitors' room."

"I must go now, anyway, Ariban," Shelley said coolly. "Ariban, remember we always have a place for you at home."

Torn, I looked at them both, then went back to my room. The clothes and scents were gone. When I asked, the Monjutor said, "Those things are not your life now."

"I'm confused," I told Shelley.

"This place," she said, watching me from her chair, removed from me, table between us, "has confused you. You're trying to break out of your nature. Ariban, do you think I could ever use you as a terror chimera again?"

"Shelley, don't confuse me, too." I'd been dependent on her for so long.

"I suspect many chimeras go mad trying to be human in these places. You look shabby, Ariban."

"They took away the clothes you'd brought."

"I promise, Ariban, if you'd just come home with me, everything will be all right. I miss you. You'll go mad here."

"I'm so alone."

"So come with me," she said, rising to leave.

"I have to tell the Roshi," I said. "I have to talk to him and the Monjutor."

"No, Ariban, come now or stay. I can barely stand to see you like this, in those robes, confused."

"The Roshi says doubt is necessary."

"He would."

I left with her, changing in the car to a sweater with wing holes and flannel pants. She dumped the monastery pants and robe in the gutter, and told her driver to take us home.

When we went down to the kennels, Hippogriff blocked my way, shifting from paw to hoof. Horse tail stiffly up, he shoved me back with his big eagle head and shook it from side to side. No.

I threw my arms around him and said, "Oh, Hippogriff, things will change now." He thrust me away and shook his head, then stared at me.

I looked back at Shelley and grinned, but she wasn't smiling a bit. "You're back now, chimera," she said, "where you belong. I'll have you re-tanked, clean that Buddhist crap out of you."

She left me in the basement with Hippogriff, too startled and too hurt to move, incapable of following her.

Before I could be re-tanked, I searched upstairs for black boxes when Shelley and Paul were out, and found one in a cabinet with a pickable lock. I smuggled the box to the basement, electrocuted all the mechanical compulsions in it, then put it back in the cabinet without arousing the suspicions of the house guard.

The next day, Hippogriff and I were in the garden, inside the great walls, when Paul came up with a black box on his belt. Terrified myself of Hippogriff's signal-induced rages, I backed away, then saw Shelley, with a stunner in her hand.

Hippogriff trotted a few jerky steps toward Paul, then the little breast hands fingered the air.

"They *do* teach them how to sabotage boxes in that hideous place," Shelley said.

"If your beast contaminates mine," Paul said, "I'll . . ."

Hippogriff wheeled, rushed up and hugged me, then nudged me onto his back. I bent down to unfasten the ramp-way gate and rode him down to the kennels, hearing the iron gates drop behind us.

Hippogriff showed me Hildegard's liquor supply, and I opened a bottle for him and began guzzling quickly myself. After fifteen minutes, Paul came down with netmen. I wobbled to my feet and smiled at all of them, too

drunk to function well under any compulsion, then sank gently to the floor. *Mechanical means.*

One of Hippogriff's breast hands pointed the middle finger. Hippogriff's eagle head looked down at the hand as though it had, much to his surprise, acted independently, while I giggled helplessly from the floor.

"Both of you will be tanked, soon," Paul said. "Ariban, if you give Hippogriff any of your Buddhist ideas, your tanking will be most painful." He left the iron gates down when he went back upstairs.

But that night, before Paul could take me to be tanked, the brain worm woke me with its electric tickle. "No," I screamed, the hunting urge rising, "Shelley, you bitch."

Tear her throat open. I padded upstairs and found the top small door open — wide enough for me, not Hippogriff. Sniffing, I smelt her. "Please get out of my mind," I cried, hunting her, lethally hunting her. "You promised. Oh, damn bitch."

The house seemed empty except for the scent trail, the thing mocking me in my own head. I lost my bearings when the kill urge hit especially hard.

Where does the mind begin, the Roshi seemed to ask from my memories, but I howled him away and searched the upper floor, caught the scent again, closer, so close that what tatters of rationality I had left wondered why she'd set up such a short hunt.

At the bottom of the great oak stairs. I rushed her, but she laughed and cut me down midstride. I beat my wings to try to keep my balance . . . tumbled . . . tumbled . . .

When I woke up, I knew I wasn't in my kennel bed, nor back at the Refuge. Vet's, I realized. Belly down on a vet's table with one wing in temporary traction, bone ends still grinding against each other. Sore from neck to hips. *Oh, the bitch*, I thought, biting the table pad.

"Well, I've tanked you before," the vet said. "One of those pseudo-talking ones."

"Can I be tanked like this?" I asked. The wing was numb, but I knew it had been broken in several places.

"Trying to pass for human in a Zenbo refuge? We'll tank that out of you. Why can't a woman keep her scare toys in peace?"

"Can I be tanked with my wing like this?" I asked again.

"You came in squalling that she did it deliberately. Tried to run away from her earlier. You want a Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals officer to take a complaint?"

"Trapped me on the stairs."

"You get hit with pleasure to bring you down, don't you? Hunting's built into your genes. After we improve your attitude, you won't complain." He bent over me and felt from the root of the wing up to the tip. "Smashed in a

few places. You must have fallen on it."

"She'll kill me, eventually," I said. "Or Paul will."

"Can get you the S.P.C.A. rep. Make a complaint if you want."

"She didn't use the pleasure blast last night. Just cut me down. I want."

"Yeah, this first," he said as he injected me.

When the S.P.C.A. rep came, I fought the drug to talk to her. She asked me why I left the Refuge and I began crying, mumbling. "Too inhuman, too afraid." She looked at my back, touched my face, then put her recorder up and gently patted my shoulder on the less hurt side.

"We'll keep your case under observation," she said.

A nurse came in to keep me under sedation. I stared at the S.P.C.A. rep until my eyelids snapped shut.

The vet operated on the wing bones twice, putting in steel pins like giant imping needles while I lay paralyzed but awake on his operating table. Finally, he put a support cast around my chest with metal struts in back to support the bound wing. When Shelley came to pick me up, she made an appointment for the conditioning tanks, whether my wing had completely healed or not. "Vigorous tanking," she said.

I wondered how much longer I'd live. The vet handed her an air injector with directions on sedation levels.

She made me lean on her as we walked out, each step jolting pain from my wing, as though a nerve had been pushed into a light socket. In the car, I leaned stiffly forward, uneasy to be near her.

I couldn't have hurt my wing and shoulder that badly in a fall, I realized. She'd tried to smash her broken toy.

Bodyguards took me down to the kennels where Hippogriff waited for me. My bed was in his stall — I lay down on it and he curled down beside me, lifted his head to nuzzle me gently with his beak.

For two weeks, I didn't see Shelley at all, not even when I walked in the big garden with Hippogriff. One of the bodyguards came down every four hours to shoot me down with sedatives. Then at the end of three weeks, she sent for me, looked at me, my splintered wing, and told the bodyguards to take me back to the vet, to take stunners in case I got violent. And they sedated me heavily. When we got to the vet's, they had to hold me up.

The wing drooped, but the bones seemed to be knitted. The vet disappeared for a while after checking my heart, then came back and told the bodyguards to take me home. The S.P.C.A. had put a hold on my re-tanking.

I suppose I was lucky he was an honest vet.

"Let's see," Shelley said, turning my still drugged body with her hands.

"Yes, a certain raffish look, fallen angel."

I felt made of lead — face, hurt wings, all the body — although she turned

me as if I was airy. "S.P.C.A.'s put a hold on my tanking," I said, lead-tongued, too.

"But," she said, "I can still use you. Yes, I can still use you."

She sent me to my own kennel room and had Hippogriff locked in his stall. The sedation stopped, suddenly, which left me tense and jittery. That night, as I lay awake, wing throbbing, I heard Hippogriff clack his beak softly, whistle.

Hippogriff's stall was locked, but Hipp clambered up the wall with his lion feet and thrust his breast hands out between the door bars. Something fell, glittering, back inside the bars. He lowered himself and felt around desperately, beak and hands scrabbling through the straw, then came back up, in one hand a knife, in the other a key. I took them.

Then he made a Buddhist hand sign, flurried his fingers. I shrugged in dismay, not knowing his sign language, and tried to unlock the stall door with the key. It didn't fit.

Then I felt, nauseously, the hunting urge. Hippogriff saw my face muscles tighten and whinnied in dismay, a strange sound to come from his eagle head.

Shelley, I'll really kill you this time, I thought as I stuck the knife in my belt and went upstairs to the dark. Working with purpose as well as compulsion, I broke the glass on their coin display and put a copper coin in the base of a lamp, screwed the bulb back in, and made sure the lamp would short out when Shelley re-set the breaker switch.

I hunted better in semi-dark, and now the compulsion fed my natural rage — I glided with the compulsion, not resisting at all. When I passed Paul's desk, I found that Hippogriff's stolen key fit it. Noiselessly, I opened the desk and felt around. Money? Escape tools? Sliding drawer with a trick catch — there, I found a key ring, with two keys big enough for Hippogriff's lock. I cut off a piece of the drapes and tied the keys to my belt.

Then I went to kill Shelley, stalking over the carpets, smelling her hysterical breath, with wine on it.

The lights blazed for a second, then popped off. I waited despite a surge of compulsion, told my brain, *ah, this time*, as my eyes adjusted back to the dark. Then I moved slowly, avoiding the furniture.

I'd never *really* tried to kill her before.

She was near. I smelled her all over, strongest toward the library. A light bobbed there, and the kill compulsion washed over me.

I'll burn her — she'll stay dead this time.

The flashlight came back on. *She'll blind me with it*. Then, back in my mind, I seemed to hear the Roshi, "Where does the mechanical end and the mind begin?"

Really, I thought angrily, *I do want to kill her*.

Trying to avoid the wavering light beam, I darted through the library door, bruising my hurt wing against the door frame. The pain calmed me

some, but my wings writhed, and she obviously saw me. Stepping toward her, I pulled out the knife, expecting to be cut down by the skull-bound ecstasy, but she didn't move.

Where does the compulsion begin? Flashlight lens under her chin, Shelley's face looked like a skull as she waited. She was very drunk, sad.

My brain pushed my hands forward. The compulsion ends here. I cut the belt off her and stabbed the buttons over and over. A white flash flared in my mind, but not the usual ecstasy that collapsed my killing hunger.

"Shelley," I said sharply. I could hear her heart pound. And the compulsion to hurt her was still in my head, my mind, the machine — I didn't know.

She let me take the flashlight out of her hand. "I messed up the button," she said, "in case I chickened out at the last, but you can kill me now, can't you? Then Paul will kill you and we'll be dead together."

But no, part of my mind shouted to the killing urge. She was fighting the urge to run. I grabbed her arm and pulled her over to the drapes, slashed them — I'd tie her up. She wanted to die; I'd refuse her the satisfaction.

Hippogriff, I can escape on Hippogriff.

When she saw the twisted cords in my hands, she tried to scream, so I gagged her first. Then I tied her arms and legs together and kissed her on the forehead, above the frantic eyes, before I raced down to the basement, throwing the iron gates open.

Hippogriff's head jerked up and I said, "Got to get away."

He looked at me and made the sign with his hands, then shook his head. The key fit his lock. After shuddering once, he came dancing nervously out of his stall.

As alarms began to ring, we went up to the front of the house and found a big window. When I turned my head aside, Hippogriff kicked it into a spray of glass, then I jumped on his back and he leaped. Another deeper siren cut in — Hippogriff's escape siren.

I clung to Hippogriff and pointed to the turns as he raced full out through the night streets. Nothing short of a full police squad could challenge him — horse body, head of an eagle, claws of a lion, the brains of a man — Hippogriff. Giddy, I clung to his back.

But the humans had surrounded the monastery before we got there. In front, nets and gunmen, electric flares dropping harsh light on them. Paul's Jag slewed to a stop behind the gunmen.

"Let's give . . ." I almost said *give up*, but Hippogriff threw his head back and screamed, charged them, speeding up the instant he saw the police. Desperately hanging on, I kept thinking, *we're going to get caught in a net, we're going to get killed . . .*

Lion paws slashing, hooves kicking, stomping humans he'd crippled, Hippogriff broke through the line and wheeled at the monastery door, almost crushing my leg into it. I slid off and the huge chimera walked stiffly

forward, between me and the police, then went rigid, like a medieval statue.

We heard a helicopter, blades hitting the air like thick whips. A man with legs braced on either side of a side door pointed down a large gun — whale gun, elephant gun, hippogriff gun — and fired one round. Paul and Hippogriff both screamed; Paul ran toward Hippogriff as the monks inside opened the door behind me.

Hippogriff's intestines spilled on the street, but he still held his head and chest up with his lion paws. He signed with his chest hands, and I saw Paul's hands tremble, then sign back. Then Hippogriff shuddered, collapsed, the dark blood no longer pumping. The monks levered my arms from the door jambs and pulled me completely inside.

I cried in someone's arms, human, chimera, I didn't know which or care, floating around in the cypress tub full of Buddhists trying to console me. When I stopped crying, they lifted me out of the tub, dressed me in monastery clothes, took me to the Roshi.

"The Carterets accuse you of stealing the Hippogriff," the Roshi told me. He sat on his dais, looking terribly sad. "We don't mind being used a little here, but the laws . . ."

"They lie. Hippogriff wanted to help me escape." I looked up at his eyes — two dull stones. Suddenly my stomach lurched — I felt shrunken and tiny. "Do you mean I have to go back to them? She'll kill me. Paul's already threatened me with a lethal needle if I hurt her." *Seduce him*, my mind suggested. I had no concept of seduction, just threw myself down in front of him, laid my head against his thighs, wings beating the air.

"You can't even think about it properly," he said. Then he smiled and stroked the damaged wing. "Obviously, you've been badly used. What did you do?"

"I planned to kill her. But I didn't. I stabbed the belt box. She wanted me to kill her."

"Sit." He meant in full lotus. "I trust you took the belt off before you stabbed it."

"Yes," I told him. "She held the flashlight with both hands, the dead-man switch jimmied, I think. Then I tied her up and unlocked Hippogriff's stall. He kicked out a window and brought me here."

"The big chimera thought Shelley was dead. Paul Carteret claims you lied to the hippogriff."

"I didn't." Since I came down conscious, walking, after being brain-roused to hunt, Hippogriff must have thought I'd gotten Shelley. "Oh," I said, suddenly realizing.

"And you destroyed a valuable coin, cut up draperies." He sat for a while.

I crumbled out of position — a tiny, helpless thing — and cried that he couldn't send me back. He poked me with the bell handle and said, "There's still the S.P.C.A."

"An animal," I cried. "So I'm just an animal then?"

"All of us are animals. Someday, I suppose a silicon device will ask for refuge, but so far not."

"But they can't just put you away, legally, with a lethal needle?"

Until the S.P.C.A. officer arrived, I worked on an assembly line, worked numbly, ignoring those around me, the sympathy, the fear. The Roshi himself took me off the line; and I followed him to a reception area where the S.P.C.A. officer, a human woman, waited, the same one who'd taken my report earlier at the vet's.

"Hi," she said when I came in, "you look more alert today."

"I suppose," I said, "I've got more to be alert over."

"The wing, then, didn't heal properly? I'm supposed to put you in restraints," she said, sounding as if that was unfortunate.

"I killed the box, not the box's operator." Then I looked at the Roshi, eyes not at all, now, like brown stones. "Should I just go ahead and accept the restraints?" I asked him. Pound, restraints, like an old unwanted animal.

"Perhaps," he said, "you should consider how vindictive the Carterets might be, and how powerful that thing in your head could be."

The woman looked down, thoughtfully — she'd be driving the car. Restraints, like an animal, yet they were letting me know ahead — I wasn't just thrown down under nets, stunned, shackled. I bowed to the Roshi and said, "Perhaps we all would feel better if nothing worse happened." Turning to the woman, I said, "I hope your restraints are comfortable."

"Perhaps Ariban could put them on, or help you?" the Roshi suggested.

Awkward fingers, hers and mine, rigged me with a harness that locked my arms down. Then she fixed my legs in chains so I couldn't raise the knees or take wide steps, and sat me down in a wheelchair.

"We'll clear the halls," the Roshi said, "so you won't be seen like this. I think you need a simpler refuge than can be found here, but if you do come back, you won't remember us watching you in chains."

"I suspect that's not likely," I said.

"But you'll always know how to learn," he said, dismissing me with the little bell.

As she rolled me through the halls to the garage elevator, I imagined I wore a costume, played a role — chimera in chains. We got in the car and drove into the big freight elevator. At the surface, the Monjutor swung the last gate open and bowed us out.

I saw Paul's Jaguar and hissed in my breath. "Paul," I said, tossing my head in his direction as she helped me onto the car seat.

"Carterets," she said, "damn Carterets." She radioed for reinforcements as I began to feel rage, stimulation, tickle my brain. Paul's car swung into traffic behind us. "Remember," she said, "you beat that last night. You haven't been tanked for a while."

Yeah, why, then, were her knuckles white on the steering wheel? I leaned back hard against my sore wing, hoping the pain would numb the compulsion. Paul must have boosted the unit — burning, burning. Then I realized, said, “It isn’t like last time.”

“Keep talking, Ariban,” she said. “Describe it.”

“I’m fantasizing about Shelley, like the tank holo, three-dimensional puppet. I don’t have to move a muscle — it can be all in my mind.” My arms suddenly stopped straining against the belt cuffs, and I slumped, as though my motor control was cut, but I still could talk. “Yeah,” I said. “I can imagine I kill — I don’t have to do it.”

“Human minds,” she said, relaxing her hands on the wheel, “are so complex they don’t take signals quite like rats do. I imagine your brain is almost on the same order. You have to be conditioned to *believe* you have to react to the stimulus in a particular way.”

“I don’t have to *do* anything.” I rushed a little mental Shelley through my mind — she shrieked, totally trapped. I killed her and made her get up, killed her again, and again. “Imagination . . .”

She didn’t like getting up again, my fantasy Shelley. I wondered how the real Shelley I’d left tied on the floor liked getting up, not being killed. Drunkenly stumbling through the halls . . . I stood the imaginary Shelley up again, sulky in her blood, and I refused to be her killer, wiped away the blood, healed the wounds.

Some stimulus played deep in my mind — defocused, impotent. I looked back and saw Paul’s car surge forward as though he wanted to ram us. Then he pulled up, parallel to us, and I saw Paul stare at me through the tinted glass, tears in his eyes. I arched my back, wiggled my fingers, then felt ashamed to mock him. The windows opaqued as the Jag passed us completely — the electric tickle in my brain going away with it.

I shook myself as best I could in my restraints and smiled over at the woman. She took one hand off the steering wheel and patted me gently.

“What did you mean, almost as complex a mind as a human’s?” I asked the S.P.C.A. woman as she unlocked me from the cuffs.

“Well,” she began to say. We were going into the pound building.

“Come on, you can’t be one of those people who thinks we just use language like elaborate parrots, signal and response?”

“Ariban,” she said. The pound reception area was almost empty, just a couple of male humans, guards, and an old chimera, gnome, with an arm in a sling, sitting by a human guard, playing checkers.

“So I have to stay here tonight? Can I call you by a human name?”

“Nancy,” she said. “I’m supposed to check you for weapons, see that you shower with miticide soap, and stay with you until you settle down. We’ve got tranquilizers if you need them.”

The trio of creatures talking over checkers and coffee looked at me and

smiled. I went with Nancy back to the showers, and stood, shivering and covered with foul-smelling soap bubbles, while she checked me and my clothes for weapons. Then I rinsed in hotter water, and she wrapped me in a large towel, carefully draping it between my wings. As I dried off, she slumped down on a bench, long legs splayed out in front of her.

"You never owned a chimera, did you?" I asked shyly.

"Child," she said. "I was never a rich girl."

"What happens now?" I asked.

"We petition for re-sale. Paul Carteret already petitioned to have you killed as an uncontrollable chimera. I can testify against that. We'll win. We do have some of the rich on our side, some corporate district bosses."

"And I go back to being a terror chimera?"

She handed me coveralls and a shirt. "Maybe put the shirt on backwards, then if your wings get cold, we'll drape them with something." The coveralls had suspender snaps in front, low cut in back. "With that tattoo," she added, "no sensible person would use you as a terror chimera. And we won't arrange a sale with a screwball. We'll also hold permanent re-sale approval on you, too."

"Oh." I just stood there.

"Sleepy?"

"In a pound cage?" I asked back.

"This," she said, "used to be a human hospital. It isn't like what you heard about when you were growing up."

We walked back to where the old gnome chatted with the human guards as though they'd all been friends for a long time. "How could you have dealt with a chimera like Hippogriff?" I asked.

"You miss him, don't you?"

I began crying and sat down on a couch. She touched my cheek softly and said, "I'm sorry about him, too, but he did die knowing he'd gotten you back to the monastery."

"Maybe I gave him bad ideas?"

"Maybe you inspired him? He was free for a while — he could have surrendered you to the police. Do you drink coffee, tea? Or just water?"

"Lapsang Souchang," I said, remembering when I'd steal it out of the human kitchen, and everyone knew because of the smoky smell.

"A tea?" she asked. When I nodded, she laughed. "Not so lush here, Mr. Ariban, I'm afraid. Would Silver Train do?"

"Yes," I said. As she heated the water and filled two cups, I thought, *a human serves me, how strange.*

As she handed me the cup, she asked, "And what can you do besides scare people?"

"Serve dinners, breakfasts, read, write. The Carterets had a great library."

She looked into her tea thoughtfully and pulled out the tea bags from both our cups, then said, "And what was the Dharma Refuge like?"

"Confusing. It seems peaceful until you actually get into the activities — very agitated inside the mind."

"So you chickened out?" She smiled to mellow the insult.

"I thought Shelley had changed. Or wanted to believe she'd changed."

"Sorry," Nancy said. "Grown humans don't, not often."

We'd been talking like two human beings, I realized suddenly, and I smiled at Nancy, then huffed out a little breath as I thought about what she said.

"Sleepy?" she asked again, taking the empty cups.

"You'll sit with me until I'm asleep?" I asked. She nodded. We went quietly into one of the small rooms where another chimera slept on the second twin bed. She just sat there until I was asleep.

The S.P.C.A. lawyers kept me out of the courtroom as they fought the Carteret lawyers. I think I was video-taped during interviews with Nancy — at least we went into mirrored rooms where she asked me questions I'd already discussed with her, about how I hated being a terror chimera, about how I'd been treated.

"Shelley," Nancy told me one day, "is in a European hospital, where the



media can't interfere with her."

Then after several quiet weeks at the pound, while I waited with other beaten chimeras, Nancy came in with the re-sale order.

A piece of paper — so much influence paper had on human minds. This thin slice of matted wood-fiber, with ink sprayed on it, saved me from a lethal injection.

Over tea, Nancy introduced me to the woman who was thinking of buying me, a middle-aged woman, but not too old, rich, who wore tweeds and white gloves.

"Could I please have my wings cut off, if you buy me?"

"No," she said, that firm patron of the S.P.C.A., "then you'd just be another short man." She pulled out a pad, dictated to me, then had me add and divide figures on her calculator. After I had finished, she said, "We'll have that wing fixed, adjust the tendons, and deal with that worm in your brain, too."

I really didn't want to be owned, but society had no place for me — too expensive for a factory, compared to the price of humans.

Nancy smiled and said, brightly, "The brain surgery alone will cost about a third of what she's paying for you."

I went under the anesthetic wondering if this was all a joke, and came to as my new owner smiled — tenderly, I suppose — down at me. I ached all over, especially around the wing and head.

My new owner, the heroine of her newscasts, took me out in public with her before training me to become her butler. After weeks of household accounts, I began to get restless. Rounds of tennis with rich women didn't wear me out enough. She treated me kindly, but as though I was a rescued dog. As her servant, I had free use of the phone to place household orders and relay news tips. So feeling bored one day, I called the Dharma Refuge and asked to speak to the Roshi.

"I'm not satisfied," I told him.

"That's life," he said and hung up.



AMAZING[®]

STORIES

60 Years of the Best Science Fiction



That's right. For over sixty years, **AMAZING[®]** Stories has offered fascinating and thought-provoking science fiction and fantasy by some of the genre's best-known authors. Continuing in this proud tradition, we publish works from among the best writers, including David Brin, Avram Davidson, Tanith Lee, Keith Roberts, and Robert Silverberg.

Enhancing the fiction are book and movie reviews by guest authors, interviews, science articles, and other features, plus stunning artwork by some of the field's best artists — George Barr, Larry Elmore, Stephen Fabian, John Lakey, and Val Lindahn.

(Clip & Mail)

I'm convinced . . . send me my own personal subscription to **AMAZING** Stories starting with the next available issue. (Please PRINT clearly)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Prov. _____ Postal Code _____

Country _____

Subscription rates for 6 bi-monthly issues (check one):

- ☐ In the U.S. and in Canada, \$9 per year in U.S. funds **only**
- ☐ Foreign via surface mail, \$25 per year in U.S. funds **only**
- ☐ Foreign via air mail, \$50 per year in U.S. funds **only**

Check one to indicate your choice of payment:

- ☐ Personal check enclosed
- ☐ MasterCard
- ☐ Money-order enclosed
- ☐ VISA

Credit Card No. _____

Expiration Date _____ M/C Bank No. _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail to: **AMAZING** Stories, P.O. box 72089-BL, Chicago, IL 60690.

AMAZING is a registered trademark owned by TSR, Inc.

©1986 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB

Take any 5 books for \$1 with membership.

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL SELECTIONS.



• 2378 Pub ed
\$14.95



\$280 Pub ed
\$14.95



• 2261 Pub ed
\$19.95



2444 Pub ed
\$18.95



2204 Pub ed
\$19.95



2139 Pub ed
\$15.95



1982 Pub ed \$19.95



2470 Pub ed \$14.95



2022 Doctor Who and the Deadly Assassin; Doctor Who and the Face of Evil; Doctor Who and the Robots of Death. Spec ed



2428 The Black Company; Shadows Linger; The White Rose. Spec ed



• 1925 Spellfinger; The Hear of the Gate; The Day of the Disappearance. Spec ed



0752 Eirik of Melithead; The Sailor on the Seas of Fate; The Weird of the White Wall. Spec ed



1172 The Vanishing Tower; The Base of the Black Sword; Stormbringer. Spec ed



0075 The First 5 Amber Novels. 2 vols. Comb pub ed \$32.30

Note: Prices shown are publishers' edition prices.

• Explicit scenes and/or language may be offensive to some.

How the Club Works:

You'll receive your 5 books for only \$1 (plus shipping and handling) after your application for membership is accepted. We reserve the right to reject any application. However, once accepted as a member, you may examine the books in your home and, if not completely satisfied, return them within 10 days at Club expense. Your membership will be cancelled and you'll owe nothing.

About every 4 weeks (14 times a year), we'll send you the Club's bulletin, *Things to Come*, describing the 2 coming Selections and a variety of Alternate choices. In addition, up to 4 times a year you may receive offers of special Selections, always at low Club prices. If you want the 2 Selections, you need do nothing; they'll be shipped automatically.

If you don't want a Selection, prefer an Alternate or no book at all, just fill out the convenient form always provided and return it to us by the date specified.

We allow you at least 10 days for making your decision. If you do not receive the form in time to respond within 10 days and receive an unwanted Selection, you may return it at our expense.

As a member you need buy only 4 books at regular low Club prices during the coming year. You may resign any time thereafter or continue to enjoy Club benefits for as long as you wish. One of the 2 Selections each month is only \$4.98. Other Selections are higher, but always much less than hardcover publishers' editions—UP TO 65% OFF. The Club offers more than 400 books to choose from. A shipping and handling charge is added to all shipments. Send no money now, but do mail the coupon today!

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB®

Dept. BS-088, Garden City, NY 11535

I want the best SF in or out of this world! Please accept my application for membership in the Science Fiction Book Club. Send me the 5 books I have numbered in the boxes below, and bill me just \$1 (plus shipping and handling). I agree to the Club Plan as described in this ad. I will take 4 more books at regular low Club prices in the coming year and may resign any time thereafter. SFBC offers serious works for mature readers.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

Mr. _____
Ms. _____
(Please print)

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

If under 18, parent must sign _____

The Science Fiction Book Club offers its own complete hard-bound editions sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save you even more. Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Canada. Offer slightly different in Canada. 38-S022



1743 Pub. ed \$16.95



1933 Pub. ed \$18.95



2220 Pub. ed \$15.95



2360 Spec. ed



1420 Includes the First, Second, and Third Books. Spec. ed

Adventurers Wanted

Extensive travel to new lands...new planets and unexplored territories!

Require: Applicant for exclusive adventure club. Take on robots, dragons and dangerous aliens throughout the universe!

Equipment furnished.

To Apply: Fill out the information on the reverse. You will receive the 5 adventures of your choice.



2352 Pub. ed \$17.95



0992 Dragonsong, Dragonsinger, Dragoedums. Comb. pub. ed \$38.85



2451 Spec. ed



2105 Escape Velocity: The Warlock in Spite of Himself. Spec. ed



2238 Pub. ed \$18.95



2121 King Kobold Revived: The Warlock Unlocked: The Warlock Emerged. Spec. ed



12436 Spec. ed



5529 The Sleeping Dragon: The Sword and the Chain: The Silver Crown. Spec. ed



1883 Pub. ed \$17.95



2019 Spec. ed



1809 Spec. ed



2188 Spec. ed



2212 Ender's Game: Speaker for the Dead. Comb. pub. ed \$29.99

Take any 5 books for \$1 with membership.

See other side for coupon and additional Selections.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOK CLUB®

Note: Prices shown are publishers' edition prices.

38-S022
©Copyright © 1986 by Paramount Pictures Corporation.
STAR TREK is a Trademark of Paramount Pictures Corporation.
Registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. All Rights Reserved.

AMAZING

STORIES

Dear DRAGON® Magazine reader:

Thank you for responding to our offer. Enclosed is your free sample of AMAZING® Stories magazine.

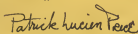
AMAZING Stories covers the entire range of imaginative fiction, from the hardest science to the purest fantasy. But don't take our word — read the free copy now in your hands. As you read the stories and articles, we know you will agree that AMAZING Stories — America's oldest fiction magazine — offers the best selection of adult fantasy and science-fiction literature on the market today.

In the months ahead, AMAZING Stories will feature stories by Lillian Stewart Carl, Avram Davidson, Sharon N. Farber, Keith Roberts, Susan Schwartz, and F. Paul Wilson. Complementing these are stunning pieces of artwork by such noted artists as Janet Aulisio, George Barr, Doug Chaffee, Stephen E. Fabian, John Lakey, and Keith Parkinson.

In addition, each issue of AMAZING Stories includes thematic reviews of important fantasy and science-fiction books and films, a personal opinion column by Robert Silverberg, letters from our readers, portfolios by leading artists, science-fiction articles, and interviews with contemporary writers.

Thank you, once again, for taking time to respond to our offer. Now — join us for the exciting adventures ahead by mailing in your subscription today!

Sincerely,



Patrick Lucien Price,
Editor,
AMAZING Stories

I'm convinced . . . send me my own personal subscription to **AMAZING** Stories starting with the next available issue. (Please PRINT clearly)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Prov. _____ Postal Code _____

Country _____

Subscription rates for 6 bi-monthly issues (check one):

- ☐ In the U.S. and in Canada, \$9 per year in U.S. funds **only**
☐ Foreign via surface mail, \$25 per year in U.S. funds **only**
☐ Foreign via air mail, \$50 per year in U.S. funds **only**

Check one to indicate your choice of payment:

- ☐ Personal check enclosed ☐ MasterCard
☐ Money-order enclosed ☐ VISA

Credit Card No. _____

Expiration Date _____ M/C Bank No. _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail to: **AMAZING** Stories, P.O. box 72089-BL, Chicago, IL 60690
AMAZING and **DRAGON** are registered trademarks owned by TSR, Inc.
©1986 TSR, Inc. All Rights Reserved